MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

BILHANA

P.N. Kawthekar

SAHITYA AKADEMI

Bilhana

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From Nagarjunakonda, 2nd Century A.D.
Courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi.

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Sahitya Akademi

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PREFACE

It is a focus on the great Sanskrit poet Bilhana for his literary achievements and contributions to enrich the cultural life in India. Even for the academic and informative purposes, a book entirely devoted to Bilhana was essentially felt necessary. The Sahitya Akademi also wanted to present a monograph on this illustrious poet of the 11th century A.D. This will be the single book perhaps on Bilhana. I extend my thanks to the Akademi for assigning this work to me.

We can very well peep into the medieval age through Bilhana. However the contributions of Sanskrit poets are not limited to a particular age. With the literary appreciation of their works, we come to know how they have imbibed culture and enriched human mind through the ages.

Bilhana stands unique in giving the historical information in his *mahakavya*, the *Vikramankadeva Charitam*. The events mentioned by him are confirmed by history.

While presenting this monograph, I remember the keen interest of my departed wife Mrs. Pramila Kawthekar in this work. She inspired me to devote my study on Bilhana. The works on the History of Sanskrit Literature and some editions of Bilhana's works were quite useful to me. I extend my thanks to all of the authors.

A thing of beauty is a joy as well as an inspiration for ever. Bilhana richly deserves the attention and appreciation.

Dated 02. 04. 1991
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Kashmir as Sharada Desha

Bilhana has been rightly respected for his literary contributions to Sanskrit literature. Being a scholor as well as a poet of high order, Bilhana's contribution to Sanskrit poetry has been always appreciated by scholars, critics and lovers of literature. Bilhana was born in Kashmir. The entire beautiful vicinity of Kashmir was blessed with a son of beautiful and excellent literary merits. Bilhana, as we shall see later, was born in the 11 th century A.D.

The Contribution of Kashmir

Before Bilhana appeared as a shining planet on the horizon, Kashmir had been the homeland of Sanskrit poets and scholars. There was already a great tradition of creative literary activities sponsored by kings of Kashmir. It was the great seat of Sanskrit learning and literature. This is the reason why Kashmir was called as Sharada Desha. Bilhana in his tributary remark says, `the poetry and the saffron are the two beautiful creations of Sharada Desha i.e. Kashmir, which I never found elsewhere:

सहोदरा: कुड्.कुमकेसराणां भवन्ति नूनं कविता-विलासा: ।
न शारदादेशमपास्य दृष्टस्तेषां यदन्यत्र मया प्ररोहः ।।

There had been a galaxy of great men of letters in Kashmir, without taking into consideration the contribution made by them, no literary survey will be complete. The statement of Bilhana can be adduced by giving a brief account of literary contributions of Kashmir. The men of letters were inspired by the Himalaya, the river Vitasta, water ponds and the beautiful men and women. Vitasta is at present called Jhelum.

Among many a poet of Kashmir, some prominent ones can be mentioned here, so that the contributions of a great tradition which was prevalent in the pre-Bilhana period will be known.

At the outset, we can name Matrigupta (5 the century A.D.) who is said to have ruled Kashmir and was a great poet of Sanskrit. His verses have been quoted by later scholars. His successor Pravarasena II was also a great patron of art and literature and on his request the *Setubandha Kavya* was produced by a poet. Bana has praised Pravarasena for errecting a bridge on the river Vitasta[1]. Bhartrimentha is also the renowned name of a great poet whose verses have been quoted by Kshemendra in the *Suvritta Tilaka*, and also by Mammata in the *Kavya Prakasha* and by Bhojaraja in the *Saraswati Kanthabharana* and the *Shringra Prakasha*. He had composed the *mahakavya*; *Haya-Griva-Vadha,* which is not available. According to Kalhana, Bhartrimentha was at the court of King Matrigupta of Kashmir. He flourished in the first half of the5th century A.D.

Ratnakara was another great Sanskrit poet who enjoyed the patronage at the court of Kashmir king Chippata Jayapeeda (A.D. 800.). He produced the work, the *Haravijaya*, the *mahakavya* of 50 cantos. Ratnakara remained honoured at the court of the king of Kashmir Avanti Varma (A.D. 855-884) who was the successor of Chippata Jayapeeda. Ratnakara flourished in the middle of the 9th century A.D. Besides the *Haravijaya*, he produced the *Vakrokti-Panchashika* and the *Dhvanigatha-Panjika* also. The *Haravijaya* is regarded as a gem of the Sanskrit literature for its grandeur and greatness. Utpaladeva (9th century A.D.) and others from Kashmir have written an excellent *stotra*-literature, some of them are lyrics of high order.

Shivasw..mi was a Shaiva. He presented a *mahakavya*, the *Kapphanabhyudaya* which contains an ornate poetry on a

---

कीर्तिः प्रवरसेनस्य प्रयाता कुमुदोज्ज्वला ।
सागरस्य परं पारं कपिसेनेव सेतुना ।।

(*H. Ch*)

Buddhist Avadana. According to Kalhana, Shivaswami flourished in the kingdom of king Avanti Varma. This *mahakavya* is composed on king Kapphana into 20 cantos which contain various *alankaras* and different meters. Kalidasa, Mentha and Dandi were the ideal poets for him.

Kshemendra was also a great poet of Kashmir in the period of the Kashmir king Ananta (A.D. 1028-1063) and his son king Kalasha (A.D. 1063-1089). No account of Sanskrit literature will be complete without mentioning the works produced by this Kashmirian poet. In a disturbed atmosphere in Kashmir, he tried to emphasise on the piety in life through his literature. He produced the works entitled the *Samayamatrika* and the *Dashavatara Charita*. Also the *Ramayana Manjari*, the *Brihatkatha-Manjari*, the *Avadana-Kalpalata*, the *Charu-Charya-Shataka* and others are his works of high merits. He was also the writer of the well-known works as the *Kavi-Kanthabharana*, the *Auchitya-Vichara-Charcha*, and the *Suvritta-Tilaka*. He abridged the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* in the interest of the great epics made readable for general readers. The culture was the essence of his literature. Kshemendra was a poet who did not ignore the element of *Katha* in literature. The stories of the *Brihatkatha* of Gunadhya have been rendered in Sanskrit by him as the *Brihatkatha-Manjari*.

Kshemendra is regarded as a Vaishnava poet, however he was respected equally by the Buddhists for his contribution in the form of the *Kalpalata* which was, after his death, completed by his son Somendra. Kshemendra's devotion towards Lord Shiva also can be ascertained from the following verse describing his death:

पूजयित्वा स्वयं शम्भुं प्रसरद्बाष्पनिर्झरः ।
गाढं दोर्भ्यां समालिंग्य यस्तथैव व्यपद्यत ।।

(*Brihatkatha Manjari*, concluding verses 4-5)

In fact, he was a great soul.

In this illustrious tradition of Sanskrit poets of Kashmir,

Bilhana stands shining like a gem. King Kalasha and his son king Harshadeva of Kashmir were his contemporary rulers. Kshemendra was a great scholar and a poet like Bilhana. But, as the history tells us, king Kalasha was not a ruler of good character. (vide *R. T.* By Kalhana, 7. 293; 305.)

Kshemendra probably was not happy with the atmosphere in Kashmir of those days. It is significant that Bilhana also did not stay in Kashmir at the time of King Kalasha. The great poets, Mankhaka and Kalhana (12th cent. A.D.) appeared after Bilhana's time. Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* is a great source of information about Bilhana also. According to Mankhaka, it was Bilhana's sublime expression that inspired Kalhana:

तथापचस्करे येन निजवाङ्मयदर्पणः ।
बिल्हण-प्रौढि-संक्रान्तौ यथा योगत्वमग्रहीत् ।। (*श्रीकण्ठचरित* 25/79)

Most of the scholars who had presented excellent works on Sanskrit poetics were from Kashmir, some of them can be mentioned here: Bhamaha (6th century), Vamana (8th Century), Rudrata (8th-9th Century), Anandavardhana (9th Century), Abhinavagupta (10th-11th Century), Kuntaka, Mahimabhatta, Mammata and Kshemendra (11the Century), Ruyyaka (12th Century A.D.) were among those who had produced original works on Sanskrit poetics. The *Pratyabhijna Darshana* of Kashmir as expounded by Abhinavgupta was the inspiring thought for scholars of Sanskrit poetics. Kashmir's name as the Sharada Desha was justified by these poets and scholars.

It was the land of philosophy and religion also. The social life was very much calm and quiet. The life of Kashmir people was the part and parcel of the beautiful nature. The Himalaya was the abode of Lord Shiva and the entire panorama was a sacred place for the people of Kashmir. Kashmir was the place of the Himalayan ranges where goddess Saraswati practised the 'tapa'[1]

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1. स्थाने तत्र त्रिनयनगुरोर्निर्जिने नूनमद्रेः
सा वाग्देवी भजति शमिताशेषतापा तपांसि । (*V.D. Ch.* 18.8)

Kashmir of Bilhana

After finishing the brilliant work, the *Vikramankaeva Charita*, Bilhana had full satisfaction.

Doing full justice in depicting the life of his hero, King Vikrama VI in 17 cantos, Bilhana experienced great relief to think of his own life and the account of his mother-land Kashmir. He presented the same in the 18th canto in the same poetic style.

When he concluded the *mahakavya*, he was in Kalyana, the capital of Karnata Desha in the south. It was in the fitness of the things that Bilhana wanted to be associated with Vikrama VI in the literary work also. By writing the autobiography, he obliged us a lot.

It is significant that his autobiography starts after the description of Kashmir, because Kashmir was the part of his life, and he described it with great affection. The 18th canto. starts with the description of the capital city of Kashmir first and then the poet gives us the account of rulers of Kashmir, and later on he comes to his ancestors. In the end we find him as a man expressing his cherished desire to spend the last days on the bank of the holy river Ganga.

He affectionately remembers the city Pravarapura situated on the sacred river Vitasta, wherein the gardens of grapes, the rays of the sun in summer were mild and pleasant. Is it not true even today? Great pandits of Sanskrit lived there as it was the sacred place for them. The learned pandits had surpassed *guru* Brihaspati in scholarship. The city was closely associated with the Kailasa the dwelling place of goddess Saraswati. The poet tells us about its intellectual status by giving the information that even ladies of the city in every house could speak Sanskrit as fluently as they used to speak in their mother-tongue:

यत्र स्त्रीणामपि किमपरं जन्मभाषावदेव
प्रत्यावासं विलसति वचः संस्कृतं प्राकृतं च।

(*V.D.Ch.* 18.6)

The river Vitasta is also highly praised. It is compared with Ganga of the heaven. The charming young women take the bath in the river. They were the centre of attraction in the gardens for the youth. The courtyards of the houses in the city were paved with crystal stones. It surpassed the cities like Alaka of Kubera, Lanka of Ravana and Amaravati of Indra. The spontaneous outbreak of poetry and the saffron from this land has been very mauch appreciated in the world.[1] The charming ladies of the city were famous for their amorous movements on the main streets there. The poet remembers passionately the rich arbours covered by white grapes at the skirts of the forest. In the centre of the city there was a confluence of two rivers on the banks of which there were *agraharas*, and houses of Brahmins granted for sustanence. According to our poet there was no garden without a pond for play, there was no pond without lustful women and there was no such lively women without the young men indulged in the conjugal love with them.[2]

The *mathas* and lands granted by king Sangrama and king Ananta were situated on the banks of Vitasta. There was a temple of Lord Shiva constructed by Subhata, the queen of king Ananta of Kashmir.

The magnificent royal places were on the banks of the river. Bilhana had seen floating boats which are called today *shikaras* and house-boats in Kashmir, on the board of which comfortable bath-rooms also were provided. The icy water, soil and sweet young ladies were effective enough to cool down the hot temperature of summer. Kashmir was a heavenly abode of both beauty and excellence. He never forgot Kashmir in spite of the fact that he received the highest honour at the court of Vikrama-VI in the south. It is truely expressed:

जननी जन्मभूमिश्च स्वर्गादपि गरीयसी।

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1. काव्यं येभ्य: प्रकृतिसुभगं निर्गतं कुङ्कुमं च। *(V.D.Ch. 18-16)*
2. यस्मिन् किञ्चिन्न तदुपवनं यत्र नो केलिवापी
 नैषा वापी न विषमधनुष्कार्मणं यत्र रामा:।
 नासौ रामा मनसिजकथाद्यातभग्ना युवान:
 कामं यस्या न निबिडतरप्रेमबन्धे पतन्ति।। *(V.D.Ch. 18-20)*

The temple of Lord Shiva is described by the poet as, 'it still shows in its roof the hole, through which king Pravara bodily ascended to the heaven'. Bilhana remembers that particular hole on the top of the temple of Kashmir while he was at Kalyana in the south.

The city Pravarapura was the capital of Kashmir. At present there are archaeological remains of old palaces and *mathas*, temples and houses which were described by Bilhana. At present, Pravarapura is called Pampar and the river Vitasta as Jhelum.[1]

In the pre-Muslim period in Kashmir, it was a great centre of the Shaivism, the Buddhism and the Vaishnavism. Bilhana has described with great devotion the magnificent temples of Lord Shiva on the bank of Vitasta. He has also mentioned that there was a famous Chaitya, the Buddhist *stupa* at the Jayavana. The Vaishnavism was also followed in Kashmir. Kashmir was under the influence of Lord Buddha because he was regarded as the *avatara* of Lord Vishnu. The Buddhism was popular due to the influence prevailed from the rest of the Himalayan regions, Tibet and China in the east and from Turkey in the west. Turkey was called as the Tushara Desha, because the people of Kashmir faced the *Tusharapata*, i.e. the fall of snowy drops in that region. One of the ministers of Lalitaditya, the king of Kashmir (A.D. 700), was a Buddhist devotee from Turkey. His name was chankana. The Shaivism was the salient feature of Kashmir because it enjoyed the holy presence of the Himalaya, the celestial abode of Lord Shiva. All the cults were enjoying a coherence in the social life of Kashmir.

Tushara Desha, mentioned in ancient works in India was in the north-west of the Himalaya. Turkey was the last point of Tushara. Lalitaditya, the king of Kashmir (A.D. 700) died there

1. It is to be noted that Dr. Raghunath Singh in his edition of the *Rajatarangini*, (pt. II p. 23,1973) has referred to the escavation done by king Lalitaditya of Kashmir (A.D. 700) and the two temples of Vishnu which were found bearing inscriptions installed by Rama and Lakshmana. According to Singh it is an archaeological evidence to accept the existence of Lord Rama and Lakshmana. Where are those inscriptions?

when he was on a successful expedition, probably due to heavy hail-stones which were very severe. Hence It was called Tushara Desha.[1]

The Art

We have seen how a *matha* was built up by Subhata, the queen; and a dramatical theatre was attached to it. The facilities of the teaching and recreation were provided simultaneously at the *matha*. The subject-matter of the plays used to be religious and pauranic like the life of Rama. Bilhana mentions about the staging plays in which beautiful actresses and amateurs used to present the performance. This might have been a different place in the city from the *matha*. It shows how the city Pravarapura had an enjoyable centre of art. The poet has preserved the lively picture of his beloved city.

We are amused to find that the *matha* created by Subhata was well equipped with a dancing hall where ladies used to perform dance without any restriction. The scholars and teachers were free to enjoy the performance. It was felt appropriate to provide the healthy recreation for scholars and the students with a theme of culture. Once the provision of staging the plays is made, the other fine arts also must have been appreciated in the society. Bilhana remembers those beautiful performances enjoyed by him as one of the learned audience. He must have seen such tradition of staging the plays of great poets like Bhasa at the temples in the south. He indicates the similar practice prevalent in his home-land.

The Rulers of Kashmir

The city Pravarapura was established by King Pravarasena. The poet mentions the names of Kshemendra Gupta and Sangrama, the rulers of the past. He obviously gives a detailed information about his contemporary rulers of Kashmir:

1. *R.T.* 2.4.211, Tushara, Tuhkhara; 4.246.

King Ananta (1028-1063) has been praised by the poet for his heroic expeditions and religious works. This ruler died when Bilhana was away from Kashmir. But in his young age, the poet must have seen the regime of this ruler.

King Anantadeva has been praised for his truthfulness, liberal nature and bravery. He fought against the Shakas and Daradas. He extended his expedition up to the region of Ganga. He visited with his harem the sacred lake Manasa. He ruled over the territories of Champa, Darvabhisara and Trigarta. Darada was also under his influence. It was the region situated in the north of Srinagar known as Daradistan. Champa is today's Chamba of Himachal Pradesh and Trigarta as the region near today's Jullundhur. His rule was effective at the palaces ofkings ofBhartula and Lohara (known as Laramandal). Darvabhisara was the land between two rivers, Chandrabhaga and Vitasta.

Anantadeva built up a huge *matha* in the middle of Vitasta at the Vijayakshetra, where the Bhatta Brahmins used to live. It was a sacred place.

Kalhana, the great historian poet, tells us that Ananta was miserably harassed by his son king Kalasha in his old age. He had to shift to Vijayakshetra, but there also Kalasha set his father's abode on fire. Then Ananta became very much disheartened and committed suicide. (P.L. Shastri, *V.D. Ch. Sam.* pp. 86,87 & 97). This was the tragic end of a long successful life. But, Bilhana does not mention the tragic death of Ananta. Ananta died in 1062. It is quite probable that either Bilhana was away from Kashmir, he did not know about this tragedy or he did not think it proper to expose Kalasha, the ruler ofhis homeland, by describing his cruel character and malpractices while the poet was in his expedition upto Kalyana, the capital city of Karnata Desha ruled by his illustrious patron Vikrama Deva VI.

Subhata, the queen ofking Ananta has been higly praised by Bilhana. She was very much generous and gave away the *agraharas* for the sustenance of Brahmins. She built up *mathas* and temples on the banks of Vitasta and we have seen how she

Kashmir. She was the daughter of Induchandra, the ruler of Jullundhur. Her impact on the life of the people was appreciated by the poet.

Kshitipati

The poet refers to him thrice in the *mahakavya*. Pandit Bharadwaj suggests the version stating him as the brother of Subhata, instead of the brother of king Ananta, but Dr. P.C. Shastri is doubtful about the name Kshitipati as the name of the king, since Kalhana does not mention him among Subhata's three brothers. If we take him to be the brother of king Ananta, he had no real brother named Kshitipati. It seems that Ananta's first cousin Kshitipati by name must have been mentioned here by the poet.

Bilhana was very much in favour of Kshitipati, who was the ruler or in charge of the Fort of Lohara. He was a scholar, a poet, and a generous ruler who was proficient in the *Nyayashastra*. The regions of Bahusthala and Rajapuri near Kashmir were conquered by him. In his court, in both the sides, scholars used to sit. This king is compared with king Bhoja of Dhara as learned and talented patron of literature[1]

King Kalasha (1063-1084)

King Kalasha, as we have seen in the context of king Ananta, proved to be a cruel son. He lived licentiously. Kalhana tells us that Kalasha was a notorious ruler and had a loose moral character. (*R.T.* 293,305,308). However, Bilhana is silent on this aspect. He praised his valour. According to Bilhana, it was king Kalasha who had defeated many a ruler.

Moreover, Kalasha has been mentioned for his 'roving expeditions' upto the lake Acchoda. 'Wandering over the plains marked by the hoops of Indrayudha, he silenced the attendants of Kadambari, who sang the praises of Chandrapida.'

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1. भोजक्ष्माभृत्सदृश महिमा (*V.D. Ch.* 18.47)

The description of this expedition contains the allusion to Bana's *Kadambari*. The scene is from the region in the Himalaya. In the praise of king Kalasha's valour and bravery, Bilhana made the nymphs forget Chandrapida, the lover of Kadambari. Here, the super-natural element in the life of *kinnaras* and *yakshas* might have helped Bilhana to mention the story of Bana's time (7th century A.D.) as true as in his own time (11th century A.D.). also. It is remarkable to note that king Kalasha is described as the lord of the people of the mortal land (मर्त्यलोकैकचन्द्रः) to be distinguished from Chandrapida of the super land. Thus, the allusion stands true in case of nymphs who belonged to the semi-super-natural status for all time, even in the time of Bilhana. The element of the super-natural phenomena or Bana's immortal art saved Bilhana from his anachronism. Thus, the fancy, the daughter of a poet, is made the fiance of a legendary hero of the past.

King Kalasha is described to have marched to the mount Kailasa. He penetrated to the city of the *Yakshas*. He brought with him the golden lotuses from the lake Maṇasa. He crossed the desert like the brave king Jayapeeda and conquered the country of the Amazons. Kalasha did not boast for the victory of Amazons because it was the 'stree-rajya'. Then he made his successful expedition against Kurukshetra. King Kalasha extended his expedition successfully upto the regions of Yamuna. However Kalhana does not mention the expedition of Kalasha. It is doubtful whether Kalasha had a vast invasion on the various territories. Bilhana simply wanted to glorify the king of his home-land. He used his poetic genius only in the description of this king, since the poet was not with him in his expedition.

King Harsha Deva

He was the son of king Kalasha. Harsha ruled between 1084-1101. He surpassed Shiladitya Harshavardhana in inspiring poets to compose poems. Kalhana tells us that Harshadeva was famous as a poet knowing many languages. His poems were very melodious. Harsha's younger brother was Utkarsha Deva, who had defeated the great warrior Kshitijit of Lohara.

Vijayamalla was another son of Kalasha. He was a learned as well as a handsome young man.

As we read in the end of his *mahakavya*, Bilhana must have heard about Harsha Deva's generocity and his friendly behaviour with the scholars. The favourable atmosphere in Kashmir might have inspired a desire in his mind to serve Kashmir. The ruler then was a patron of poets and scholars. It was obvious that Bilhana pined for going back to Kashmir to have the company of learned people there. However, this expression was due to his devotion to his home-land.

We learn from the history that there was a great conflict between the brothers i.e. Harsha, Utkarsha and Vijayamalla for the throne, but Bilhana didn't mention this. He looked it from a distance.

Here we find Bilhana as true cultural ambassador of Kashmir and to its rulers. He presented an excellent picture of the rulers of Kashmir while he was amidst the people and royal dignitaries of Karnata Desha. The integrity of the poet towards his home-land has rendered the *mahakavya* the greatness and grandeur. It seems that Bilhana had avoided exposing Kalasha, the ruler of his home-land.

In fact, Bilhana was not primarily a historian. Hence he gave us the account of his contemporary Kashmiri rulers. It was in the fitness of the things that in the description of events of the life of Vikrama, these rulers of his home-land had no relevance. They could have appeared only in a brief autobiography, because they had some relevance with the poet, and not with the western Chalukya king. It is also true that at the time of Kalasha, the king of Kashmir, Bilhana had to leave Kashmir. This is why he did not give us the genealogy of the whole Lohara dynasty of Kashmir.

However, he respected the contemporary rulers of his home-land and devoted 69 verses in their account. Moreover, prelude to the account of his own life, it was Kashmir and its rulers who were described first. It is appreciable that without showing nay bitterness about any Kashmirian ruler like Kalasha, he has poetically elevated them in his *kavya*. In fact, his autobiography starts from the verse no. 70 of the 18th canto.

Life

Bilhana's Autobiography

An autobiography of a classical Sanskrit poet is a rare thing. This is somehow strange to find that poets, who were clever and high-mined in depicting the human characters in literature, were less interested in presenting their own feelings, thoughts and events connected directly with true life. We wonder how a poet ignores his own life to be recorded for the posterity along with his immortal literature.

Of course, in the subject-matter or the plot, his own life does not come into the picture, but separately, he should have thought of giving some events of his own life. We find only the name of Kalidasa, and not about his place, family etc., in the *prastavana* of his plays, in which the *sutradhara* could have mentioned about them.

This does not mean that these poets had no historic sense. As if they were modest in giving their personal life account. Perhaps they accepted a piece of art as an impersonal phenomena. They seemed to avoid to mingle their personal accounts into an external piece of fine art. It means the authors of the Indian aesthetic were right in propounding the theory of generalisation of particulars i.e., *sadharanikarana* which can be accepted into a piece of literature without any difficulty. Poets like Kalidasa were not following the rhetoric rules or theories as such, but unknowingly they preferred to separate personal data from the impersonal literary expression. They preferred to universalise their own feelings and tenets only through characters and events. Thus, we find personal observations are reflected in literature, these sources of poets personal life are as the *upadana karana* for his literature, yet

the material found the place in an appropriate and beautiful manner, took the shape in literature. It leads to a universal phenomena which is free from personal limitations as such. Poets seem to be afraid of the idea that a *sahrudaya* may not like to read their personal events in a literary piece. Also there was a practice of not to speak about the self. But to write the name was not restricted. It does not mean that poets like Kalidasa totally ignored history. For instance, Kalidasa presented the play, the *Malavikagnimitra* in which he had chosen the plot of the ruler belonging to the Shunga dynasty. Agnimitra is known to the Indian history. In a way, no plot either historical or a fiction is debarred from presenting a literary work. However, the element of *rasa* is essentially to be maintained in it. In this way, we find poets like Kalidasa who did not mention details of the personal data of their own life, because it might, according to them, have marred the beauty of the work.

We find, of course, in later period, Bhavabhuti and Banabhatta, without harming any beauty of their literary pieces, have mentioned their parents' names. The *Harshacharita* the work produced by Banabhatta has been accepted as the autobiography of the poet and also as literary work of high order. Banabhatta, for the first time had established that an autobiography can be accepted in the *gadya-kavya* in Sanskrit. However the authors of the Sanskrit poetics failed to accept separately the autobiography as a literary form. The different forms of the *gadya-kavya* do not include the form of an autobiography, in spite of the glaring illustration of Banabhatta's *Harshacharita*, which is only an *akhyayika* and not called as the *atmavritta*. Bana was the first ancient Sanskrit poet who did not debar personal element in a permanent piece of literature.

Fortunately, Bilhana did present specifically the account of his personal life. He followed the tradition of Bana. In his famous *mahakavya*, the *Vikramankadeva Charita*, Bilhana has devoted the last 18th chapter for the autobiography. Of course, like Bana, Bilhana did not give any personal anecdotes which took place with his patron—Vikrama VI. It is said that in his last days, Bilhana had suffered heavy material loss due to the displeasure of king Vikrama VI but he did not mention any

episode of such an event. Although he was frank in giving a straight advice to the rulers to respect the poets in general it gave the idea of this conjecture that Bilhana might have faced the Royal displeasure.

Bilhana was at the court of the Vikramankadeva VI of Kalyana in the Karnata Desha in the south, and he faithfully depicted his life in 17 cantos. Amongst some of his patrons, Bilhana respected Vikramankadeva VI as the most ideal king. He could have mentioned only his relationship with the king as a court-poet and the plot of the *mahakavya* would have been complete, but, by having keen sense of giving his own life-account in the same poetic style separately in verses in the end, Bilhana helped to enrich literature as well as history. Unlike Kalidasa. Bilhana gave us the information about the place where he was born and the names of kings whom he met in his lifetime. We read the description of his birth place in Kashmir, the village Khonmusha. He described the city named Pravarapura, which was situated near Srinagar of today. He was a true genius who immortalised his birth place. While going through his account in the *Vikramankadeva Charita,* we learn about some of his contemporary kings. He did not ignore the contemporary world.

Of course, Bana and Bilhana observed the sense of propriety about choosing the form of literature. Bana did not give his autobiographical note in the *Kadambari*. The historical writing only allows poets to give their personal account. The *Harsha Charita* was in fact the suitable work, because it gives the account of events of king Harsha (A.D. 610-650) of Kanyakubja. Similarly Bilhana gives the life account of his patron Vikramaditya VI, i.e. Tribhuvanamalla (A.D. 1076-1127) of the western Chalukya dynasty. However, in both the works, the treatment of the autobiography is rather different. In the *Harsha Charita*, Bana has started with the genealogy of his family from the beginning, but Bilhana, gave his autobiography in the 18th canto independently in the end after elaborating the life-account of Vikrama VI in 17 cantos. Of course, Bana and Bilhana did not give personal account in their *Kadambari* and

Chaura Panchshika respectively. As it is said in the lyric the *Chaura Panchashika*, the 50 verses were recited by Bilhana himself at the hanging place where he was to be hung. We do not find such personal data in these 50 verses. Of course, intensivity of personal feelings of love can be the cause of the lyric. In fact, they are revealed as the spontaneous overflow of the poet's intensive love for his beloved Shashikala. It was the proper place for any autobiographical note. Kalidasa also might have suffered a lot due to his separatation from his beloved, but it was not expressed directly in the *Meghaduta*.

However, the history is benefitted by Bilhana's autobiography and also by the biography of his patron Tribhuvanamalla, the Vikrama VI.

The date of Bilhana

Although, he had given a vivid description of his village and its surroundings where he was born, Bilhana did not mention the date of his birth.

Fortunately, we have got his autobiography given in the last 18th chapter of his *mahakavya*, the *Vikramanka deva Charita*. In the beginning of this chapter the account of the rulers of Kashmir is given, about which we get some information in the last chapter of this work. We learn that there were three rulers of Kashmir when Bilhana flourished. They were Ananta, Kalasha and Harsha Deva. We learn from Kalhana that Bilhana left Kashmir and reached Kalyana in the south, and enjoyed the rich patronage of Vikrama VI of the Chalukya dynasty when Kalasha was reigning. His two verses can be quoted as follows:

काश्मीरेभ्यो विनिर्यातं राज्ये कलशभूपतेः ।
विद्यापतिं य कर्णाट श्च क्रे पर्माडिभूपतिः ।।
त्यागिनं हर्षदेवं हि मत्वा सुकविबान्धवम् ।
बिल्हणो वञ्च नां मेने विभूतिं तावतीमपि ।।

(Bilhana left Kashmir reigned by king Kalasha. Vikrama VI of Karnata Desha appointed Bilhana as the *vidyapati* in his

state. On hearing about king Harsha's generosity, Bilhana regarded so much wealth earned in the south worthless.)

Bilhana himself has informed us :

"I was honoured by king Chalukya, Vikrama VI, with the post of the *vidyapati* and black royal umbrella with a band of mighty elephants. I enjoyed immence wealth there."

Kalasha was made the *yuvaraja* in 1062. It is clear that Bilhana did not leave Kashmir before 1062. Or he must have left Kashmir in 1062 and joined the royal court at Kalyana when Kalasha was reigning in Kashmir. It is also evident that Bilhana lived to see Harsha Deva, son of Kalasha, who ascended his father's throne in 1089. It shows that Bilhana lived after 1089, because he says that Harsha Deva was friendly to the poets and hence he expressed his desire to go back to Kashmir to have the company of learned scholars and poets. Thus the verses of Bilhana and Kalhana corroborate each other. Gairola has given the year of poet's leaving Kashmir as 1050. But in view of Kalhana's version, this year is not acceptable or Buhler has fixed the year between 1062 to 1065. Winternitz has given 1065 for his departure.

However, to fix the year between 1062 to 1065, it would be better to point out a reference given by Bilhana himself. While giving a description of his academic expedition, Bilhana tells us about his visit to Dhara, the capital city of Raja Bhoja of Malwa. From his verse we can say that before he reached Dhara, he had no idea of the sad demise of that great King.

He lamented at the gate of the city after knowing the death of Bhoja, because Bhoja had earned great fame as a generous patron of art and literature. Also, the poet himself had a great desire to seek the appropriate seat at the court of Dhara. Bilhana had some preferences of his own. Like Harsha Deva, Raja Bhoja also must have been preferred by him to be his patron. Kalhana also confirms that there were only two kings i.e. Harsha of Kashmir and Bhoja of Dhara, who were very much friendly to poets and gave away so much grants to them. Bhoja died in 1063. It is clear that the poet reached Dhara immediately after the death of Bhoja in 1063 or in the early days

of 1064. After he left Kashmir, Bilhana must have taken two years for his transitory tour in which he visited Vrindavana, Mathura, Prayaga, Varanasi, etc. Thus, we can arrive at the year of Bilhana's departure from Kashmir as 1062 and not 1065.

From Bilhana's own account, we learn that he had attained his full youth and proved his proficiency in the field of creative literature and the scholarship, before he left Kashmir. In view of his maturity, he was at the age of 40 or 42 when he left Kashmir. Thus, we can say that Bilhana was born in A.D. 1020 or 1022 .

We are not sure when and where Bilhana breathed his last. After leaving Kashmir in 1062 to reach Kalyana the capital city of Karnata Desha, Bilhana must have taken some years. Vikrama VI of the western Chalukya dynasty ruled between A.D. 1076 and 1127. It is clear that Bilhana reached the capital of his patron Vikrama VI after 1076. It is true that the *Vikramankadeva Charita* was composed by Bilhana in his old age. Since he once expressed his desire to go back to Kashmir in the regime of Harsha Deva, we can say that he composed the last verses in Harsha's time. Harsha ascended the throne in 1084. It means Bilhana lived to see Harsha in 1084, whom Bilhana had praised so much, but the *mahakavya* was completed in 1087 or early in 1088 in Kalyana. Bilhana did not mention the war expedition undertaken by his hero Vikramanka VI beyond the river Narmada, which took place in 1088.

In the last verses of the last chapter of the *mahakavya*, the poet gives some frank advices to rulers in general to respect the poets and to remember that death is inevitable for them also,and they should extend the high positions in their kingdom to poets who oblige to make them immortal in the *kavyas*. He says that the rulers should not hate poets. It is guessed that in the end of his stay in Kalyana, Vikrama VI was displeased with Bilhana and all his wealth was confiscated by the ruler. Hence, it appears that the last verses about Harsha and his advice to rulers were composed and added by the poet after he left Kalyana, probably in early 1088. In the verse no. 103 of the 18th canto, Bilhana simply expresses his desire to enjoy the literary

discourses with the Kashmirian pandits, but he had the cherished desire to spend his last days in Varanasi at the bank of the holy river Ganga. This might have been composed while he was in the south.

Thus, we can say that Bilhana left Kalyana in 1087 or early in 1088. He remained to hear about Harsha's favourable regime starts from 1084. By adding some years more, we can say that Bilhana probably breathed his last in 1093 or 1094.

Kalhana came after Bilhana. He knew about Bilhana's high position in Karnata Desha as the 'Vidyapati' but he did not know about his last days in Varanasi. The history tells us that Harsha of Kashmir was assassinated in 1101, but Bilhana did not know about this tragic end of his beloved king. Hence, we can conclude that Bilhana's span of life was between A.D. 1020 to 1094.

His Birth Place : Khonmusha

It is remarkable that Bilhana has given the description f a village named Khonmusha in Kashmir. The village was situated four kilometres from Jayavana, which is called today as Jaivan and Khonmusha as Khonmuh. Jayavana was famous for the big *Chaitya*, the *Buddhist stupa*. There was a holy pond at Jayavana known after the name of Takshaka, the great king of snakes. In the closed vicinity of Jayavana, Khonmusha was the village where Bilhana was born.

The king of Kashmir named Khagendra had granted to Brahmins two *agraharas,* i.e. grants of lands for sustenance. Khonmusha was one of them. Kalhana in his *Raja tarangini* has mentioned the two *agraharas* named Khagi and Khonmusha.

The village was surrounded by Himalayan hills. The poet has described it with great affinity. He says that the village was very much famous for plenty of merits. At this village, there were many sacred columns raised for the sacrifices. The elephant-like Kali was afraid of coming to that place, because the sacrifical columns were seen like the tying posts meant to frighten elephants. It means that there was no effect of *Kali yuga* on the village. It enjoyed the peaceful and calm life at the lap of the Himalaya. The people were very much pious.

Further, Bilhana has obliged us with the apt information about the origin of wonderful stories in Sanskrit. According to him it was this place where from, for the first time, the marvellous tales, fables and folk-tales originated. Khonmusha was the birth place of Bilhana as well as the ancient Indian romantic tales, which later on became the property of the entire country. We have the great tradition of the *Brihat-katha*. Many a version of the same work in Sanskrit literature have been well received in the world. It is to be noted that although, Gunadhya, the author of the *Brihat-Katha* was at the court of Satavahana of Pratishthana, i.e. modern Paithan in Maharashtra, he composed the work in Paishachi, the language of common people of the border area of the north-west region. The language is now called Pushtu. Kashmir dialect was then the Paishachi and Gunadhya must have borrowed the stock of his narratives from Kashmir. Was Gunadhya himself originally from Kashmir? He preferred his mother-dialect as a medium for his *Brihat-Katha.* Some scholars have traced the places of Paishachi at the Vindhyatavi, which was the forest area at the feet of the Vindhya mountain. Of course, there is much difficulty to locate the language of *Brihat-Katha* in a particular region, because the work is not available till today. Moreover, Gunadhya flourished in the first century A.D. at the time of Satavahana. If we locate Paishachi in the region of Vindhya range in the middle of India, we can say that some tribes might have migrated from Kashmir to Vindhya in the pre-Gunadhya period. In my opinion, the stock of tales also migrated from Kashmir to Vindhya region along with the tribes. Bilhana only mentions the earliest and first birth place of such romantic tales. It clearly shows that the diffusion had taken place already.

Bilhana wants to point out original place of popular tales of Gunadhya. He wants to say that the original place of popular tales was the village where he was born. This information traditionally came to Bilhana. We should also keep it in mind that Bilhana knew this tradition from which we find remarkable works like the *Katha-Sarit-Sagara* of Somadeva, the *Brihat-Katha-Shloka-Sangaraha* of Budhaswamin, the *Vasudeva Hindi* of Sanghad Asagani and the *Brihat-Katha-Manjari* of

Kshemendra. I further suggest that Gunadhya is the name from Kashmir. According to the theory of *riti* and *guna* as propounded by great scholar Vamana (A.D. 800), Gunadhya's literary success was accepted due to the element of *guna*. Also Gunadhya might have been the literary pen name of the author who compiled or edited the entire folk-tales in the *Brihat-Katha*. In short. Khonmusha gave birth to series of popular tales, which gave us the romantic characters like Vasavadatta, Udayana, Kadambari, Chandrapeeda etc. in their new garbs beautifully adopted by poets of the post-Gunadhya period. Bilhana rightly wants to refer to that original centre of inspiration.

Kashmir of Bilhana was not far away from the region of Vidyadharas, Yakshas and Kinnaras. In fact Kashmir was familiar with these beautiful Himalayan tribes, their folktales and their wonderful way of life. It is but natural that the people of Kashmir were very much curious about these wonderful tribes. These tribes were not approachable easily, since their dwelling places were in the high hilly track of the Himalaya. This is why the events of Vidyadharas were full of wonders and enjoyment. The supernatural power was attributed to them to suit the successful heroes of their tales in the end. We are grateful to Bilhana for tracing the origin of such popular tales and this one is a rare historical evidence in the field of ancient Indian folk-tales.

The village Khonmusha, being situated at the outskirts of the Jayavana, had been under the Vedic and Buddishist influence in the Pre-Bilhana period, as Bilhana mentions the famous Chaitya also. We learn from the history that Srinagar, the capital of the state of Jammu and Kashmir of today was established by Ashoka, the Great. There was a common link between Buddhist China, Tibet, Kashmir and the western regions in the ancient period.

However, the Vedic tradition through the Pauranik cult had been maintained by Karkot rulers of Kashmir. The King Durlabha-Vardhana, who ruled in A.D. 627-649 was the devotee of Lord Vishnu, and Buddha was regarded as the *avatara*

of Lord Vishnu. Bilhana only mentions the existence of the Chaitya. However, Ananta, king of Kashmir, was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. His queen named Subhata had built up a big temple of Lord Shiva, on the bank of Vitasta.

This village Khonmusha was resting at the lap of the Himalaya, Himavan the father-in-law of great Lord Shiva. The beautiful saffron and the white grapes resembling white bits of sugarcane were the rich products of this area. In this village, the learned and pious ancesters of Bilhana lived.

His Ancesters and Parents

Bilhana had come from a learned and illustrious family of Brahmin. Their *gotra* was Kaushika. Bilhana tells us that the king of Kashmir named Gopaditya had brought this family to Kashmir from Central India. The name of the exact village or town of the region left by them is not known to us, because only the word Madhya Desha has been mentioned. It was a general practice that rulers, who were the lovers of art and literature, used to invite scholars, artists and poets from other places. Even in the pre-Gopaditya period his ancester named king Khagendra had invited some Brahmin scholars to Kashmir from Kanyakubja after he conquered it.

In the family, a Brahmin named Muktikalasha was born, who became prominent later. He had the *agnihotra* and possessed a very pious personality. Bilhana tells us about his proficiency in Vedas as under:

एकत्रैव स्वमुखकमले लीलया वल्लभानां
चक्रे तासामपि चतसृणां यः श्रुतीनां निवासम्।

(*V.D. Ch.* 18. 76)

Muktikalasha was a great scholar of four Vedas. His son named Rajakalasha also was a religious scholar who performed many sacrifices. He was an expert in all the *shastras*. His son named Jyeshthakalasha was also a great scholar of all *shastras*, and knew the secret of them minutely. Moreover, Jyesthakalasha was well spoken of as a teacher. He was famous for explaining

the commentary on the *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali to his students at the court-yard of his house. It shows his popularity for his apt method of teaching as well as scholarship.

Dr. Buhler regarded that the commentary on the *Mahabhashya*, written by Jyesthakalasha was not available. However, Pt. Murarilal Nagar who edited the *Vikramakadeva Charita* has refuted this opinion of Dr. Buhler. He argued that Jyesthakalasha had neither written a commentary on the *Mahabhashya* nor it was even mentioned so by any later scholar. In fact, there where some places where such teaching of difficult *shastras* used to be conducted by the scholars in Kashmir. Bilhana himself has mentioned twice about these teaching places in his work. Since students have been mentioned by the poet, obviously the reference is made to the teaching and not to the writing of a book on the *Mahabhashya*.

Bilhana has given the account of deeds performed by Jyesthakalasha's father Rajakalasha, one of them was the creation of the places of such scholarly discourses and teaching.

It is quite reasonable that Jyeshthakalasha made the proper use of the place for teaching in the interest of students. The room at the house of Jyeshthakalasha could not accommodate all the students, hence rest of students used to occupy the court-yard for taking instructions from him. This shows how he was a popular teacher and the authority on the difficult work like the *Mahabhashya*. It is also to be seen how such places used to be crowded with willing students where the teaching was conducted by the learned teachers at their residence. In a way the houses were the *gurukulas* of those days which were well attended by the students. Thus, the teacher used to be the institution itself. Kashmir was the seat of Sanskrit learning in those days. And thus it came to be known as the Sharada Desha.

Jyeshthakalasha was Bilhana's father and Nagadevi by name was his mother. His mother was a renowned lady for her hospitality and piety:

इष्टापूर्तेष्वतिथिविषये सान्त्वने सेवकानाम्।

अन्येष्वन्येष्वपि च गहनं किं नु तस्योचितेषु।।

(*V. D. Ch.* 18.80)

This was the proper occasion to know the name of Bilhana's wife, but he remains silent.

His Expedition

It was the practice of those days that a scholar, after completing his education upto high standard, used to leave his native place, not mere for fortunes, but also to establish his scholarship in the entire country. Kashmir was no doubt the great centre of Sharada i.e. Goddess Sarasvati; however, there were also some other centres of learning like Varanasi, Mathura, Dhara etc. Some scholars in the past were well received at the courts of other rulers in the country. There was no regionalism, so far the scholarship and art of poetry are concerned.

Bilhana followed the same practice by undertaking his academic journey. He has given the account of his visits to the great centres of learning as well as the courts of rulers in the country. We have already referred to the version of Kalhana that Bilhana left Kashmir when it was ruled by king Kalasha. It was A.D. 1062. when Bilhana left.

Bilhana in Mathura and Vrindavana

This young scholar first went to Mathura. Here he could imagine the romantic place of Lord Krishna with Radhika at the site of the Vrindavana. His victorious tour started from Mathura, where he defeated a band of scholars in the *shastrartha*. He liked the place and spent some days there. He has described that his fame reached in the country through his students. It means that in Vrindavana many a student accepted him as a *guru*.

No doubt, students are the best judges. It is they who rightly enlighten the people with the virtues of their teacher. Students are like an umbrella with which the short comings and some personal defects of their teacher are covered appropriately. This is why a student is called *chhatra*, i.e. one who covers the defects of his *guru* from the world. Bilhana has used a significant word *Guna Katha* for anecdotes about his virtues like scholarship and genius which reached the places before he

physically appeared there. Only his virtues are known through his students. A son cannot be compared with a student in this respect for *guru's* pure contribution.

In Kanyakubja

When he left Mathura, his fame had already reached Kanyakubja. He went to the city Kanyakubja (Kanouj) which was situated on the bank of the river Ganga. According to him, the city had many great mansions and houses which were richly decorated by precious stones. He further went to the holy place Prayaga. Here he granted his wealth to *brahmins*. It is quite evident that Bilhana had collected wealth by that time and he disbursed the same among the *brahmins* at the holy *sangama*. We are amused to find an imagination expressed by the poet to describe the confluence of the two rivers, Ganga and Yamuna. The white stream of the Ganga was just like a cover of the sword and the blackish stream of the Yamuna was just like a sword.

In Varanasi

He proceeded to Varanasi. Here, the poet speaks highly about the sacred river Ganga. A holy dip in the river Ganga washed off his sin, he had while he met with some of the bad rulers during his expedition. It means thus he was not happy when he met some rulers during his journey. It is obvious that he did not stay any longer in places ruled by notorious rulers. However, he does not mention the names of such rulers.

Bilhana has mentioned his meeting with king Karna of great Haihaya dynasty, the ruler of Dahala. King Karna had a seat in Varanasi also, where Bilhana was honoured by him. Karna was very much influenced by his recitation of poems. Bilhana also has mentioned that in Varanasi, in a *shastrartha*, he defeated a famous scholar named Gangadhara at the court of Karna. It was creditable for a Kashmiri pandit to win over a great pandit of Varanasi, who was famous for his scholarship. This is why

his name is mentioned by Bilhana. Meanwhile, he had a connection with well-known ancient city Ayodhya, Bilhana composed some poems in praise of the holy city. Ayodhya was the capital of Lord Rama and Bilhana paid his poetic homage to it. We unfortunately do not find any such verses by the poet, however, it is evident that there were some poems he composed in respect of Lord Rama and Ayodhya. It is also quite probable that the work on Lord Rama must have been presented by Bilhana, while he was in Varanasi or Ayodhya, because he himself has said that he composed some good verses praising Lord Rama. A.B. Kieth has said that there was a *kavya* composed by Bilhana. He must have visited Ayodhya which was the source of his inspiration. However, no such work is available. Dr. Buhler is doubtful about Bilhana's visit to Ayodhya. He thinks that the *kavya* was composed by Bilhana while he was at the court of the ruler of Dahala. Mathuralal Nagar, however, has argued that Bilhana composed the *kavya* at Ayodhya. Mr. Krishnamachariar also admits that it was a *kavya* pertaining to Lord Rama. We find some verses composed by Bilhana in some collections of *suktis*. Pischel guesses that one collection of maxims was edited by Bilhana. He thinks that the name Bilhana was changed later as Shilhana. Of course a verse by Bilhana has been included in Shilhana's collection of maxims. We are uncertain about this gesture, since we don't have any direct evidence to prove this opinion. In fact Bilhana does not mention directly the name of any such work of *suktis*.

We learn from the History that Karna as mentioned by Bilhana was Laxmikarna, the ruler of Dahala (Chedi Desha) and belonged to the Kalichuri Haihaya dynasty, ruled from A.D. 1041 to 1075. He was a great warrior and his former capital was Tripuri. Later on, he made Varanasi as his second capital. Bilhana was honoured by him in Varanasi. The poet then went to Ayodhya. The verses of Bilhana which have been recorded in the collections of *suktis* are different from his composition on Lord Rama, because those two verses were based on different subjects, i.e., one was based on the generalisation in the form of a maxim or *sukti*, and the other was the life of Rama in particular.

In Dhara

Before Bilhana reached Dhara, he had already heard the name and fame of Raja Bhoja of Dhara, the capital city of the Paramara dynasty in Malwa. He had a great desire to grace the court of Raja Bhoja who was known as the great patron of art and literature. The number of works on different *shastras* were produced by Raja Bhoja. Obviously Bilhana had a cherished desire to enjoy the learned patronage of Raja Bhoja, which many a scholar and poet aspired for in those days. Bhoja was a successful ruler in both war and peace.

Bilhana reached Dhara, now known as Dhar, the town 57 kilometres, away from Indore in M.P. But alas, when he reached the great gate of Dhara, Bilhana was shocked to hear about the sad death of Raja Bhoja. Bilhana painfully imagines that the city Dhara addressed Bilhana through the noise of pigeons living in the holes of the gate-way.

'Oh Bilhana; why did you not come to Dhara while Raja Bhoja was alive? He was an excellent ruler, cannot be compared with any other rulers of the country'.

The poet imagines that the city Dhara expressed sorrow that Raja Bhoja was not alive to honour such a great scholar like Bilhana. In fact, Dhara was a great centre where the art and literature flourished at the temple of Vagdevi. There was a temple of Vagdevi in Dhara, where Raja Bhoja used to enjoy the learned company of scholars. At present, the image of this Vagdevi is preserved in the British Museum in London.

Dr. Buhler has expressed his doubt about his visit to Dhara. Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, a noted writer of Hindi, has also followed the same opinion in the preface to his edition of the *Vikramankadeva Charita*. In fact, the verse itself tells us about the poet's presence at the gate of the city Dhara. Bilhana was personally present at the gate of Dhara. Thus, he was greatly disappointed at Dhara after knowing the sad demise of Raja Bhoja. A popular verse attributed to Bhoja's friend Kalidasa (of his time) expresses the feelings of Bilhana:

अद्य धारा निराधारा निरालम्बा सरस्वती।
पण्डिता खण्डिता सर्वे भोजराजे दिवंगते।।

(After King Bhoja expired, today Dhara (the city) has no support, the goodess Saraswati has no protection and the learned men are broken by heart). Bilhana's expression could not had been different from this of Kalidasa (of Bhoja's time).

In Gujarat

He immediately left Dhara for Gujarat. Some how, he was not happy with the people's way of wearing clothes. He also complains about their bad language. In fact, the poet who had travelled without resting anywhere had to face some problems of different languages and mode of living in Gujarat, which had its own way of life in the western region of our country. Ultimately, he got a great satisfaction when he took the Darshana of Lord Shiva at Somanatha. Like in Kashmir the poet got the *darshana* of Lord Shiva in Gujarat also. The poet lived in Gujarat at Anhil-Patana, which was the capital city of Gujarat in those days.

In the city Patana, he was in the court of the Gurjarat Chalukyaraja. Karna (1063-1094), son of Bhimadeva. Here he presented the 'Karnasundari Natika'. Here, he must have spent a considerable period of his life. His play was staged and appreciated at the court of Karna of Patana.

In the South

From here he went to Konkan region which is situated in the western coast of the Arabian sea. Although, Bilhana does not mention the famous holy temple of the Gokarna Mahabaleshwar of the western region, Dr. Buhler said that perhaps he visited the place and then proceeded to Rameshwar. He saw the bridge of Lord Rama there. He avoided to meet the ordinary rulers in the south. Bilhana never compromised on choosing his master and shelter. He returned to Kalyana, the capital city of the

Chalukya King Vikramaditya VI. In those days, the western Chalukya dynasty had acquired a prominent place in the country. Kalyana was also a prosperous city. The ruler Vikrama VI was well-known for his patronage for art and literature.

Vikrama VI was immensely impressed with Bilhana, when he reached Kalyana. He was honoured in the court. According to Bilhana, Vikrama was a terror to King Chola of the eastern south. Bilhana was very much happy to settle down in Kalyana. He was duly appointed as the *vidyapati* i.e. Director of Instruction of the kingdom. He was allowed to use the peculiar prestigious umbrella of blackish colour as a sign of royal honour bestowed upon him.

Moreover, a band of mighty elephants were awarded to him. His patron was the ruler of Kalyana of the Karnata Desha. His name was Tribhuvanamalla (A.D. 1076-1127).

Bilhana settled down in the last phase of his academic tour. The fame and fortune adored the poet for many years to come. Here, he composed his famous *mahakavya*, the *Vikramankadeva Charita*, the Chalukya King Vikrama VI (Tribhuvanamalla) is the hero of this *mahakavya*.

One has to take into consideration of Bilhana whose 'Vishnustotra' on the inscription discovered in 1901 under the debris of Mandu near Dhar in M.P. (Vide C.K.Lele, Paramara Inscriptions, 1943). The historian editor mentions, 'It was composed by Bilhana a poet and trusted Minister of the Paramara King Vindhya-varmadeo of Dhar (A.D. 1160-1180)[1]

In this context, one has to see whether in his old days, Bilhana enjoyed the patronage of Vindhyavarma of the Paramara dynasty. We have already seen that Bilhana belonged to the

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1. विन्ध्यवर्मनृपतेः प्रसादभूः
सान्धिविग्रहिकबिल्हणः कविः ।
भौतिकं वपुरवेक्ष्य भंगुरं
निर्ममिऽ मरमयं सुवाङ्मयम् (Vide Paramara Inscriptions, Pp43-44)

11th century A.D. and the King Vindhyavarma to the 12th century. It is likely that Bilhana of the *mahakavya* spent his last days at Mandu and his son or grandson who served as a Minister composed the 'Vishnustotra' bearing the family name as Bilhana.

Bilhana : Man and Mind

Bilhana, in his autobiography, has duly given the account of his personality and all the merits he possessed. In fact, it was a self-presentation of a successful poet. Ordinarily it is a self-praise, but how can we ignore the fact that Bilhana was the only source of information about himself ?

We are happy to learn that he possessed the beautiful and impressive personality. He was a handsome young man of golden complexion. He was the centre of attraction for the people, men and women both. He could impress rulers with his excellent personality and its magic power:

कार्मणं लोचनानाम् (*V.D. Ch.* 18.81)

As a Scholar

We are to appreciate Bilhana for telling us frankly about his scholarship. From his own words, we know that after his thread ceremony was over, his mouth became the stage for goddess Saraswati to dance. Bilhana acquired the proficiency in the Vedas with all their *angas*, and also he learnt the grammar as discussed in the *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali. He proved to be the master of the melodious art of *belles-lettres*.

His wisdom was like a mirror in which every thing is reflected clearly. It means that he was a versatile genius. He defeated many a scholar in the *shastrartha*, because he knew the essence of all *shastras*. He also obtained the coolness from the Himalaya at the feet of which his childhood had passed. This coolness was the snowy gift from the Himalaya of Kashmir. When angry Bilhana won over the scholars, their faces looked like lotuses marred with the snow. The gift was thus effective.

He learnt the treatises in many branches of knowledge including metres, grammar, astrology, *shiksha* and *nirukta*. During his academic tour in the country, he was well honoured at the courts of rulers. When he was in Varanasi, as we have seen, he defeated a famous scholar named Gangadhara. He defeated many a scholar in the *shashrastha* in his life-time, but he never mentioned the names of those defeated scholars except Gangadhara of Varanasi, because the latter was famous for his scholarship in those days. Hence Bilhana had to mention his name. Moreover, the place where Gangadhara was defeated was Varanasi, the centre of learning. It was really creditable for a Kashmirian pandit to defeat a famous pandit in Varanasi.

As a poet

Along with his scholarship, he was a genius in creative literary expressions also. His works have already proved that he was a poet of high order. King Karna of Dahala was very much impressed with his poetry. Many a ruler offered him a seat in their courts. His recitation of poems brought him great fame. Wherever he went, he was already known to the people. Moreover, he says about his *kavya*:

ग्रामो नासौ न स जनपद: सास्ति नो राजधानी
तन्नारण्यं न तदुपवनं सा न सारस्वती भू: ।
विद्वान् मूर्ख: परिणतवया बालक: स्त्री पुमान् वा
यत्रोन्मीलत्पुलकमखिला नास्य काव्यं पठन्ति ।।

(*V.D. Ch.* 18.89)

It means that he was so popular as a poet that there exists no village, a country-side region, a capital, a forest, a garden, a centre of education, a learned or stupid man, an oldman or a child, a woman or a man who do not read Bilhana's poetry.

He was primarily a poet and then a scholar. He has strongly pleaded the case of poets in the *mahakavya*. Even Lord Rama, according to him, owes Valmiki for his fame, because without

the poet's efforts, the valour and power of rulers diminish in the dark past. A few lines are written in the history-books about these rulers. But the poets provide the eternal fame to them. Mere mentioning the name with the dates in a book of history is no doubt valuable, but everlasting fame has been extended by Valmiki, Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti, Tulasidasa and others, Valmiki has made Rama a great man in the society. It has become the inevitable force of a national culture. The history perhaps still would like to dig out the external evidences to prove the existence of Rama, but the poetry has already established Rama in the heart of people for ever.

According to Dr. Buhler, his (Bilhana's) composition deserves to be rescued from oblivion. Though he shares many of the faults of his contemporary poets as their coarseness and their conventionalism in description, he possesses a spark of genunine poetical fire. He writes in the *vaidarbhi riti*, a lucid and flowing style.

His works are known to the lovers of poetry. His drama-*Karnasundari*, the lyric *Chaura-Panchashika* and the *mahakavya* — the *Vikramankadeva Charita* have been the gems in the Sanskrit literature.

A Religious Man

In his *Vikramankadeva Charita*, Bilhana remembers the great *agraharas*, *madhas* and temples of Kashmir with great devotion. The *madhas* were like forts and houses of Brahmins as the walls which protected *dharma* from the hostile *Kali*. His ancestors were scholars of Vedas and the *karmakanda*. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. He was happy in Varanasi at the holy bank of Ganga. He offered his devotional tributes to Lord Rama also when he visited Ayodhya. In his *mangalacharana* he pays his *namaskara* to Lord Shrikrishna, Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva and goddess Saraswati. He, however expressed his firm devotion in Lord Shiva:

विधाय शान्त्यै कलुषस्य कर्मणम् तदेष सर्वेन्द्रियतापनं तपः ।

नमामि भक्त्या झटिति प्रसन्नताम् अखण्डया खण्डशशाङ्‌कशेखरम् ।।

It is significant to note that the first stanza of his *mahakavya* starts with his devotion to Lord Shrikrishna, because in the *mahakavya*, the main sentiment is *vira rasa*, and the Lord Krishna with his sword is mentioned to indicate the successful wars waged by his hero Vikrama VI. However, it is seen that whenever any disaster comes, Lord Shiva is praised and he saved the king from it.

The prominent diety was Lord Shiva. Once the king was hesitating to fight against his elder brother Someshwara, but in a dream Lord Shiva appreared and inspired him to fight, (*V.D.Ch.* 6.63).

Bilhana expresses through a character — I don't have my faith except in Lord Shiva (*V.D.Ch.* 4.58). But he never ignored other gods. He paid his devotional tributes to Vishnu and Krishna also. Like Kshemendra, he had a liberal approach to Shaivism, Vaishnavism etc. He composed a *kavya* on Rama. He was however very much happy to visit and to take *darshana* of Lord Shiva at the temples of Somanatha, Gokarna Mahabaleshvara and Rameshvara. We don't know whether he visited the temple of Mahakala of Ujjayini while he was proceeding from Dhara to Gujarat.

He was a firm believer of *dana* and he practised the same. According to him a house-holder is like a tree of *dharma* and his children are the fruits. Alas! we don't know whether the poet himself was blessed with these fruits or not.

He always mentions of *yajna* and *yaga*. From his descriptions about beautiful ladies we can say that he must have enjoyed the youth. But he followed the traditional religious practice also. He was a poet first and then a man of devotion to god.

A Philosopher

No doubt, he embarked his academic tour to conquer the scholars and to establish himself as a poet in the country. When he left Kashmir he had some motivations. However, like other *shastras*, he was interested in the *darshana shastra* also. With great pride he tells us about his proficiency in the *shastrartha*. Sometimes he is too much self-centred. But, it was the beginning of his conquest. Even when he was on tour, he had shown his some sense of detachment for the wealth. He disbursed his entire earning to Brahmins at the holy Prayaga. While giving away the *dana*, he possessed the self-confidence and also never cared for the wealth, in spite of the fact that he had to undertake the journey further. This nature of sacrifice sprang up in his old age. In his concluding verses of the *mahakavya* we read his excellent thoughts when he confesses for the first time.

'I have gained some favour and a bit of wealth from the rulers. I studied a little part of *shastras* and defeated the adversaries in the disputes. In fact, I did wrong things due to my lack of real knowledge. Now, I am for the knowledge of the Brahma and pining for the Ganga (*V.D. Ch.* 18, 104).

In the last days of his life, he had achieved the real knowledge himself. (स्वाधीनीकृतशुद्धबोधम् 18, 104)

His advice to rulers is also remarkable; Oh Kings, do not disrespect poets. He emphasised on the vanity of the wealth, which cannot be enchained. (शक्या न रोद्धुं श्रियः 18, 106)

According to Bilhana, in their old days the pious persons practice the *yoga*, detach themselves from the sensuous life and live at the sacred bank of Ganga. Like Kshemendra[1] and Rajashekhara[2] Bilhana aspires to spend last days of his life at the Ganga.

He was a wandering poet, who obtained a great store of experience to his credit. He had a vast property earned in

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(1) औचित्यविचारचर्चा
(2) काव्य-मीमांसा
'सोऽयं सम्प्रति राजशेखरकविर्वाराणसीं वाञ्छति ।'

Kalyana and was ultimately satisfied with whatever he earned and turned to be a real man of philosophical thoughts in his old age. Like Rajashekhara, Bilhana was also a wanderer. (यायावरः)

Perhaps both Rajashekhara and Bilhana got no proper treatment in the south, and earnestly wished to spend their last days in Varanasi, or they naturally preferred Varanasi to any other place.

His Nature

No doubt, we read his *mahakavya*, we find him a proud man of high intellectual power. He speaks highly about himself, his achievements. In true sense, he had to express about his virtues well established everywhere. It is somehow justified when he tells us about his homeland, birth place, family, ancestors, physical handsome appearance and goldy complexion, his scholarship and his excellent poetry. Of course he never cared for any one. In the play, *Karnasundari*, he introduces himself:

Bilhana is like a tree of India's paradise which has got its roots in Valmiki, Vyasa and Kalidasa, now is blooming with flowers and fruits. he got the inspiration from great poets.'

He was a pandit, but he was keenly interested in appreciating valour and warfare. The first verse of his *mahakavya* reflects this aspect when we find the sword of Lord Krishna is mentioned. Perhaps this was the reason that he composed the *mahakavya* on Vikrama, because the latter was really a great warrior. In a *kavya*-style, he describes how king Chola ran away when he was defeated by Vikrama:

तस्मिन् विरुद्धे गिरिनिर्झराम्बु
श्रमातिरेकात् पशुवन्निपीय।
मातेति चोलः क्षितिमादिभर्ता
कृत्वा स्तनास्वादमिवोत्ससर्ग।। (*V.D.Ch.* 3.66)

The Chola king had to run away, as if, when he drank the water without a pot, i.e. by mouth, from the brook like a beast, the land is now mother for him, and as he cannot enjoy mother-

like land he left her. Bilhana was very much interested in such far fetched ideas.

He was a firm believer of fate. He believed that there was a great role of destiny in his life. Bilhana was under the influence of the medieval notion of fate in life. He says :

भाग्येषु नास्ति प्रतिषेधमार्गः (*V. D. Ch.* 10.62)

However, he was not a slave of the fate. He left his beautiful home-land to conquer and not to yield. It was a great risk for a man of far northern region to establish in the south. He had the confidence within himself. He only accepted the power of the destiny, because he had earned a lot of experience and he had to accept it as a governing power of life.

Regarding sinful actions of Someshwara, brother of Vikrama, he says, the destiny cannot be broken.[1]

Of course, Ramchandra Sharma in his commentary on the *Vikramankadeva Charita* says that Bilhana was proud by nature, but it is to be seen that he was not arrogant nor he abused any one. On the contrary he is modest when he regards that his scholarship is due to the dust of the lotus-like feet of goddess Saraswati. (*V.D.Ch.* 18.83).

We can very well remember the expression of Kalidasa (*Abhijnana Shakuntala*):

'अथवा भवितव्यानां द्वाराणि भवन्ति सर्वत्र।'

He could be proud for inferior poets, but he was very modest. In the beginning of his *mahakavya*, he says: His *kavya* may not contain any *rasa*, but will be respected as it is the life of Vikrama. To convince the readers he says that even the clay of Ganga is placed on the head by people.

It is remarkable to note that his pride was concealed with his success in life. Also in the end of his life, he was inclined to seek

1. जातः पापरतः कैश्चिद्दिनैः सोमेश्वरस्ततः ।
एषा भगवती केन भज्यते भवितव्यता ।। (*V.D. Ch.* 4.97)

the knowledge of Brahma. No wealth and honour nor position could ultimately give him the permanent rapture or ecstacy of *atma*. In devotion to god, he realises the essence of life.

Views About Poets and Poetics

According to Bilhana, poets are expected to acquire proficiency in creative art of poetry. He mocks at the incompetent poets who enjoy the pride of new genius in the company of fools, but they are miserably exposed when they face the poets of high merit. The poems and the saffron are the twins in Kashmir. The learned poets can only understand the beauty of sentiment of Bilhana's poetry, while others will recite it only like a parrot. He advises the poets to understand the beauty of his poems.

His twin verses are often quoted in which his alarming advice to poets is given:

"Oh poets, be cautious about the theft of your *kavya* by inferior poets. However, you should not worry about the plagiarists, because there is no loss for brilliant poets (who always produce excellent poetry). For instance, the people have been extracting plenty of gems from the ocean, but even today it is called as *Ratnakara*, the store of gems".

He mocks at the ordinary poets who pretend to be the masters of genius. The stupid poets cannot elcipse the real poets. He confirms his statement saying that water can extinguish fire, but not the illuminating flash of gems. (*V.D.Ch.* 1.18).

It is a painful experience of Bilhana that he found some inferior poets who could not appreciate his poetry of high order (1.23).

The most appreciable part of his views on the poets is expressed in the verse :

प्रौढिप्रकर्षेण पुराणरीति-व्यतिक्रमः श्लाघ्यतमः पदानाम्।
अत्युन्नति-स्फोटितकञ्चुकानि वन्द्यानि कान्ताकुचमण्डलानि।।

(*V.D. Ch.* 1.15)

Any deviation from the old style can be appreciated if it has plenty of poetical charm.

In fact, Bilhana has given a remarkable view on the aesthetic value of a poetry. It is to be noted that he firmly believed in the originality in poetry. No blind imitation of previous poets will give any credit to a new poet. He has to create something new in the poetry. Bilhana gives us his firm view in favour of the high order. This प्रौढि means चमत्कृति which should be created with apt presentation of रस, गुण, अलंकार etc. According to Pandit Bharadwaj, the प्रौढि here is not one of the virtues of poetry, but it means the charm of poetry. This is the essence of poetry according to Bilhana. This new approach of Bilhana towards the literary criticism should be mentioned here with appreciation. His advice to young poets deserves proper attention even today.

Bilhana had a great sense of the principles of Sanskrit poetics. He praised the best type of *vaidarbhi riti* as under:

अनभ्रवृष्टिः श्रवणामृतस्य
सरस्वतीविभ्रमजन्मभूमिः ।
वैदर्भरीतिः कृतिनामुदैति
सौभाग्यलाभप्रतिभूः पदानाम् ।।

It is evident that this Kashmirian poet was very much influenced by Vamana, the author of the *Kavyalankarasutra*, who was a great Kashmiri rhetorician (A.D. 800).

Bilhana referes to the *chitrokti*, i.e. the ornate poetry which is beautiful due to *rasa*, *alankara* etc.

However, he is quite conversant with the *dhvani* theory of Anandavardhana. He says, 'the learned poets who understand the beauty of the *vakrokti* and follow the path of the *rasa-dhvani* in poetry can understand my poetry very well'. It means that he equally respects the element of the *vakrokti* as the essence of *alankara* (सैषा सर्वत्र वक्रोक्तिः कोऽलंकारोऽनया विना) as pointed out by Bhamaha. In the same verse he mentions the *rasa-dhvani* propounded by Anandavardhana as the soul of poetry.

One can observe that Bilhana, who flourished in 11th century A.D. in Kashmir, knew the development of Sanskrit poetics upto Anandavardhana, but he did not attach so much importance *to rasa-dhvani* as the *atma* of *kavya* or assign no secondary position to *vakrokti* or *chitrokti* as such. It seems that, like Vamana (सौन्दर्यमलंकार:) Bilhana accepts the *saundarya* or the beauty as the essence of a *kavya*. However, he speaks high of those who follow the path of the *rasa-dhvani*. There is no conflict between the वक्रोक्ति and the रसध्वनि:

He believed in the creative capacity of great poets. He bothered if any person not having any aesthetic sense did not like the genuine *kavya*. He emphasised on the प्रौढिप्रकर्ष i.e. the excellent poetry as the outcome of poet's genius. He discards the troden track of outdated pattern in poems. He further gives his appreciation to *vyutpatti*, i.e. the new expression in poems. One has to salute Bilhana for his appreciable approach to poetry and for his advice to adopt the new trend in poetry, in those days.

About Rulers

We have seen how Bilhana has paid great tribute to kings of Kashmir. He also found an ideal hero in the character of Vikrama VI. He has expressed that his *kavya* will be accepted for Vikrama's heroic deeds. He speaks highly about the dynasty of the Chalukya kings of the south.

It was the fuedal system prevalent in India and the states were independently ruled by the rulers. The word of the rulers was the final order to be accepted by their subjects.

Obviously poets were generally patronised by the rulers in their courts. There was nothing wrong if some poets were honoured in the royal courts. However, it could be examined that how far the poets were right in choosing their patrons. Especially this examination was necessary in case of best poets offering the rulers the permanent place in the history of Sanskrit literature as the heroes of their *kavya*. If a wrong choice due to some allurement was made by the poets, the benefit might go in favour of such ordinary kings, but not in such a poet.

According to the Sanskrit poetics, a brave and noble minded person (धीरोदात्त) should be the hero of the *mahakavya*. A poet finds these qualities safely in the legendary or pauranic figures. But for an epic poetry, poet must be true to his inner self. Mere kingship was not sufficient to be the hero of a great *kavya*. He must be धीर and उदात्त bold enough and noble-minded also.

In Bilhana's case, we can safely say that he had chosen a right hero for his *mahakavya*. Fortunately we know his psychological approach towards the rulers in general. He never abused any ruler directly. However, he has expressed his displeasure about some of the rulers in his *kavya*. He mentioned only about some notorious rulers while describing Bhoja as an ideal king. He kept himself away from ordinary rulers. He wanted to meet an ideal king and ultimately he got Vikrama VI in the south. He felt sorry for meeting bad rulers in life and got rid of the sin when he had the *darshana* at Somanatha in Gujarat.

About Women

He was silent about his wife, although he mentioned the name of his mother. He was a typical medieval poet who accepted to be called as a poet of romantic verses like the *Chaura-Panchashika* in general,but did not want to expose his own events with any beloved in particular. In fact no autobiography is complete without such informations.

However, he presented the picture of the queen Subhata. But he did not mention the name of the queens of King Someshwara, (*V.D. Ch.* II). The queens are known to the history as Chandrika Devi, Mailadevi, Leeladevi, Hoyasaldevi and Ketaladevi. The mother of Someshwara and Jayasimha was Vachadevi. They are not mentioned by name. Every king observes to be mentioned by name, but not a queen. However, the name of the princess of Karhata (modern Karhad in Maharashtra) is mentioned, because she was the princess whose hand was given to Vikrama VI in the *swayamvara*. She was Chandralekha. He is silent on women of the ordinary class.

It seems that there was no practice of mentioning the names

of young women of the society in literature, unless they are the heroines.

A Harbinger of the Cultural Unity

To sum up, he was a great harbinger of our national unity at such a crisis when the Indian rulers indulged in fighting with each other in the country. The poet carried the message of culture in the larger interest of values of life through his presence and presentation. Bilhana had never adopted a parochial approach towards life and literature. He preferred to stay in the royal court, but never abused any ruler by name publicly, though he was not happy with some of them. Also, he maintained his status as a poet and a scholar in all circumstances. This poet of Kashmir became the symbol of India's cultural unity, and hence wherever he went, he was respected in spite of quarrels and fightings amongst the rulers. In those days though India was divided politically it was culturally united. The credit goes to poets, artists, saints and scholars who had made a remarkable contribution to strengthen the unity of India by presenting their works of high order. The sublimity of a poet gives him a high position, not only in the contemporary society, but also with the larger interest of cultural unity in the country for ever. Bilhana stands true son of the soil.

His Love-Story

In the traditional system of Sanskrit learning in India, Bilhana has been regarded as a romantic poet, especially by the teachers of poetry and poetics. There are works like the *Bilhaniyam*, the play written by Narayana Shastri on Bilhana's love-affair. The story of Bilhana's love with a princess has been narrated, but the work entitled as the *Chaura-Panchashika* does not give the name of that lover. However, the *Panchashika* is attributed to Bilhana. The story is narrated in the *Bilhaniya-Kavya* and the *Bilhaniya-Charita* as under:

In Gujarat, there was a king of Anhil Pattana named

Vairisimha. His queen was Sutara, the daughter of king of Avanti. They were blessed with a daughter named Shashikala.

In due course of time she became a beautiful maiden. She was renowned for her beauty. Royal parents were anxious about her education. At the same time, the poet Bilhana reached Anhil-Pattana. He was brought to the king by the royal priest. The king was very much pleased to find him at his court, because Bilhana was a great scholar and a poet. The king was very much influenced by his poetry. The ruler awarded wealth to Bilhana and appointed him as a teacher for his beloved daughter princess Shashikala. She was an intelligent girl, and as desired by her father, within due course of time, she learnt Sanskrit and Prakrit literature from Bilhana.

Once as usual Bilhana was teaching Shashikala, there was a beautiful and delightful atmosphere created by nature with flowers decorating the palace. Bilhana was a young handsome man of great virtue. Shashikala was attracted towards his excellent personality and intellectual ability. She fell in love with Bilhana. Her lovely expression inspired the poet also. He equally responded to her romantic state of mind believing that the girl was the wife in his previous birth. He married her secretly in the form of *gandharva* marriage. The young couple enjoyed the conjugal love in a pleasant mode of romance. Some days passed in great rapture. After some days, this love-affair was detected by servants working in the palace. The king was informed. He was shocked to hear this and ordered to hang Bilhana. Accordingly Bilhana was brought to the hanging place for execution. He was asked of his last desire. He was also asked to remember his favourite deity. But Bilhana was not afraid of death. He recited his poems in which he said, "Even now I remember that beautiful princess Shashikala only". He remembered Shashikala and recited fifty verses in which his erotic experiences were described. The intensive love for the princess was the evidence of Bilhana's integrity and affinity about the princess. The *Chaura-Panchashika* is the work of these 50 verses.

Meanwhile, the king heard about the sincere love as expressed by the poet for the princess. Supported by others the

king asked the killers to release the poet. He gave the hand of his daughter Shashikala to Bilhana along with wealth, villages, elephants, horses, etc. It means the poet was a thief who secretly got married Shashikala and finally, when was to be hanged, recited 50 verses. In these verses his secret romantic games were expressed. In a different way, a similar story has been told in the work *Rahasya Sandarbha* with a different name of the princess. The story is as under:

There was a king named Madanabhirama of Laxmi Mandira who appointed Bilhana as a teacher for his daughter princess Yamini-Purna-Tilaka. Just to avoid any undesirable attraction between the teacher and the taught, the king was clever enough to make a special sitting arrangement for Bilhana and his daughter, so that they may not see each other. Bilhana was told that the princess was suffering from leprosy and the princess was told that the teacher Bilhana was a blind man. A curtain was placed between the two. The teaching was going on. In due course of time the princess became very much proficient in literature. Once in the evening, when there was a full moon in the sky and the atmosphere was very pleasant and beautiful, Bilhana recited his poem as under:

निरर्थकं जन्म गतं नलिन्या यया न दृष्टं तुहिनांशुबिम्बम्।

(The lotus flower's life goes waste if it has not seen the full moon)

The Princess, who was behind the curtain, was surprised to find that her teacher could see the moon. She at once replied completing the verse:

उत्पत्तिरिन्दोरपि निष्फलैव दृष्टा प्रहृष्टा नलिनी न येन।'

(The life of the moon is also in vain if it never touched and delighted the lotus-flower)

We find this verse no 32 in the पूर्व-चतुस्-सप्तति, the prefix to Bilhana's 50 verses.

The princess could know the fact that her teacher was not a blind man because he minutely described the full moon and she felt offended with the wrong information given by her father about the poet. In reply to Bilhana's aforesaid incomplete verse, the princess also completed the verse by saying that the moon's existence is in vain if he does not see and touch the lotus. She removed the curtain and saw Bilhana as a young and handsome man. After some time their love developed which was later on known to the king. He got angry with Bilhana and ordered to hang him. At the place of execution, he then remembered his beloved and expressed his love in 50 verses. This was called the *Chaurapanchashika*.

Dr. Buhler does not accept this love-story of Bilhana as authentic. Bilhana himself does not give any indication about his love-story in his autobiography. However, the work is full of verses, which gives description of the erotic enjoyment with his beloved girl, is attributed to Bilhana. Some of the scholars think that a poet named as Chaura might have been the composer of this work. But there is a great tradition of attributing this work to Bilhana. We are uncertain about the place where this secret love of Bilhana took place. Was this the reason for the royal displeasure with Bilhana in Gujarat? Krishnamachariar refers to a story which is told of a poet Chaurasundara in the Bengali version of the *Chaura-Panchashika* which is attributed to a poet named Sundara.

It has been pointed out that Bhoja quotes two verses of the *Panchashika* in his *Shringara-Prakasha* and Jakkana, a Telugu poet, in his *Vikramanka-Charita* praised Bilhana and Chaura distinctly. It shows that they are not identical poets.

The introductory part giving in details of the story must be a later addition. Vairisimha, in the story is the father of Shashikala, but this ruler of Anhilwad died in A.D. 920 and hence did not exist at the time of Bilhana (11th century). It is also probable that in his old age, Bilhana avoided to tell us about his love-affair of the youth in his *mahakavya*. His 50 verses, however, confirm the *pro-shringara* mind of Bilhana. There is a great tradition about these 50 *shlokas* as composed by Bilhana.

Play and Lyric Poetry

Before he composed his *mahakavya* the *Vikramankadeva Charita*, Bilhana had presented the play *Karnasundari* and the lyric poem known as the *Chaura-Panchashika*.

Karnasundari

Bilhana had produced the play *Karnasundari* of four acts and is called as *natika* according to the Sanskrit dramaturgy. It was published in the *Kavyamala series No. 7* in Bombay. It was written by him when he was in Gujarat, at Anhilwad where he was the court-poet at the court of King Karna-Deva (A.D.1064-1074).

For the first time, the *Karnasundari* was staged at the Jain temple of Shantinatha in Anhilwad on the occasion of the Jain festival of Saint Rishabhanatha. The secret love of King Karna with the heroine, Princess Vidyadhari, is the basis of the plot.

According to Winternitz, the play was written between A.D. 1080-1090. But it seems that the play was not written after A.D. 1076. Because, Bilhana after he left Gujarat, joined the court of King Vikrama VI of Kalyana in the south. The reigning period of Vikrama is fixed from A.D. 1076 to 1126. Therefore, the date of the play *Karnasundari* can be fixed before A.D. 1076 Moreover, Karna ruled upto A.D. 1074. After he left Gujarat probably in 1073 or 1074, Bilhana must have taken two to three years to reach Kalyana of Vikrama VI. Thus we can say that the play was written in A.D. 1073 or so.

The play deals with the plot of the marriage between king Karnadeva Trailokyamalla (1064-1074) of Anhilwad of Gujarat with Vidyadhari. The hero Karnadeva is the son of

Bhimadeva.[1] Karnadeva was the father of famous Chalukya king Jayasimha Siddharaja.

The plot resembles with that of the play *Ratnavali.* Like Yougandharayana, in this play also Sampatkara is a clever minister of king Karna. He managed to unite king Karna with the heroine Vidyadhari.

The king had seen the heroine Vidyadhari who ascended from the heaven on the earth at the royal garden, *leelavana.* Bilhana has sumarised the plot in a verse:

विद्याधरेन्द्रतनयां नयनाभिरामां
लावण्यविभ्रमगुणां परिणीय देव: ।
चालुक्यपार्थिवकुलार्णवपूर्णचन्द्र:
साम्राज्यमत्र भुवनत्रयगीतमेति ।।

At the first sight, Karna fell in love with her. He reached the resting canopy of the garden with *vidushaka,* and again saw Vidyadhari who was looking at him with a side-long glance.

King reports a dream he had about a beautiful girl who fainted at several times and she wanted to commit suicide. King prevented her assuring to fulfill her desire,but she disappeared and the king did not know where she was.

In the night, the head queen of Karna heard the words spoken in the sleep from Karna's mouth and came to know about his love with Vidyadhari. She got angry.

When Karna reached the garden, he saw a portrait of the heroine. He at once recognised and described her:

सैवोन्मज्जत्कनकलशप्रेक्षणीया तनुश्री:
मूर्तिर्लोकत्रयविजयिनी राजधानी स्मरस्य ।
एताच्चक्षुस्तदपि विदलत्केतकीपत्रमित्रं
छाया सेयं नियतमधरे विद्रुमोत्सेकमुद्रा ।। (*K.S.* 1-153)

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1. Vimal Shah, the minister of Bhimadeva I, Solanki ruler of Gujarat built up a beautiful Dilwara temple with marble stones at Mount Abu.

At the same time, the queen appeared there. She saw the portrait and came to know that it was the portrait of Karnasundari who was under her care. The angry queen at once left the place.

Karna tried to persuade the queen, but in vain. For a change, he went to see the pictures painted at the *Tarangashala,* but all of them were already erased by the queen. Then he went to the *leelavana* for the recreation, and there he saw the heroine in a pond with the lotuses:

सुतनुरनवलोकयन्त्युपान्ते
स्थितमपि काञ्चनकुम्भमम्बुपूर्णम् ।
क्वचिदपि गतमानसा करेण
स्पृशति कुचप्रतिबिम्बमम्बुमध्ये ।।

It means that the heroine was absent minded due to her love affair and could not see the real jar. She touches the reflection of her breast in the water mistaken for jar. This is a figure of speech— भ्रान्तिमान्

After taking bath in the pond of lotuses, the heroine went to the canopy of creepers with her girl friends, where the king was hiding himself behind the bushes and secretly heard the dialogue of the girls. When the king heard the verses of heroine expressing the love for him, he was very much pleased. The heroine fainted due to her agony of love, the hero immediately came out of the bushes and went forward. At the touch of the hero, heroine opens the eyes. *Vidushaka* and heroine's girl-friends wanted to leave them alone, but at the same moment, the queen came down there. They had to disperse. This reminds us the episode of Shakuntala and Dushyanta presented in the *Abhijnana Shakuntala* by Kalidasa.

The queen managed a plot to deceive the king in his love-affair. She herself wore costumes of the heroine Karnasundari and her companion become the girl-friend of the heroine. The meeting of the king with the so called heroine was arranged. The king received the love-letter. King then eagerly went to

meet his beloved in the night. No sooner he embraced her, she turned to be the queen. The king was ashamed.

Again the queen managed to play a foul play with the king. She told the king that his marriage is arranged by her with the heroine. The king was rejoiced. The moment of the marriage came. But this time, she was dubed by her own plan. She had asked the son of her sister to act, wearing woman's costumes to appear as a bride, i.e. Karnasundari, but actually she found that the marriage was taking place with the actual heroine Karnasundari, and the son of her sister was roaming out of the wedding hall. Her plan failed. It was a costly affair for her. She exclaimed.... आर्य । प्रत्यक्षं सैवेषा । अहो माहात्म्यं कपट नाटकस्य । and the queen said I am deceived so much.

The king was happy. The conspirators were successful in getting this wedding ceremony celebrated with the efforts of the queen herself.

The plot is historical and the poet himself was in the court of his hero-Karnadeva. The heroine Vidyadhari reminds us Bilhana's birth-place Kashmir where the tales of Vidyadharas were popularly narrated. In fact the heroine was a princess of king Jayakeshi of Karnataka, but is presented in the play as the Vidyadhari.

In the end of the play, we learn the important historical event of the victory by king Karna over Garjan, i.e. Muhammad ar Mahamood of Gazni on the bank of the river Sindhu. Karna was called as the Garjanadhiraja.[1]

Generally, critics have pointed out that in this *natika,* the influence of the *Ratnavali* of Harsha, the *Viddhashala-Bhanjika* of Rajashekhara and the plays of Kalidasa can be identified. However, the plot is independent and the general pattern of dramatic actions on the stage was rather common upto a certain extent. It is to be noted that humour created by the two intrigues planned by the queen is Bilhana's own achievement.

But, instead of the plot, the verses in the play became

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1. कृत्वा गर्जनकाधिराजमधुना त्वं भूरिरत्नांकुर-
छाया विच्छुरिताम्बुराशिरशनादाम्नः पृथिव्याः पतिः ।। (*K.S.* 4.22)

prominent. In place of a playwright, he preferred to be a poet. So many verses sometimes mar the activity on the stage. However some lyric poems like the following one are noteworthy :

यत्तारारमणोऽपि निर्वृतिपदंनास्याश्चलच्चक्षुषो-
र्यद्गात्रं शतपत्रपत्रशयनऽप्युत्फालमुद्वेल्लति ।
शीतं यच्च कुचस्थलीमलयजं धूलीकदम्बायते
किंवान्यत्तदनङ्गमंगलमयी भङ्गी कुरङ्गीदृशः ।।

The heroine has, with her agony of separation from the hèro, intensively and truly expressed her love in seven verses. It creates the ornate poetry along with the lively and lovely sentiment of the *vipralambha shringara* in these verses.

This *natika* was staged at the Jain temple in Anhilwad. It was again a liberal approach to such plays and poems of the *shringara rasa* which was the part of a religious festival, duly permissible and permeable, as it reminds us to such romantic performances staged at the temples of Kashmir. Bilhana enjoyed them in Kashmir and in Gujarat also. The dialogues are consistent to the characters, but they are mostly in the verses and do not allow the audience to appreciate the true conversation expected to be in the prosaic simplicity. It is said that Bilhana never cared to follow the rules of the dramaturgy. The dialogues are simply to be heard, but they do not impress with the dramatic art, because they are without any action. He could not maintain the balance of appropriateness between the *gadya* and the *padya*. The dialogues in verses are unnatural. Generally, the lyrics which appear in a play with tender fancy are appreciated, but not at the cost of a plot demanding the uninterrupted flow of events. Thus, the *drishya* element may not be eliminated in a *drishya-kavya*.

However, for a lyric we may not attach so much importance in a play. The *Meghaduta* does not contain a full story. It is a natural expression of a poet's fancy. That is all. But, the play requires the balance between the plot and the poetic free

expressions. Bilhana in the *Karnasundari* is more inclined to lyrics.

Karnasunadari composed her verse in Prakrit, but her maid servant writes the verse in Sanskrit.

According to Sanskrit dramaturgy, no scene of an embrace of any young couple is premissible, but Bilhana allowed the scene of Karna embracing the queen on the stage supposing that she was Karnasundari. As if, according to Bilhana, the restriction of any embrace with the heroine was objectionable, and not with a wife like the queen. But the king had no idea about the queen with whom he was embracing.

It is the only one play that Bilhana produced, probably in the year A.D. 1075. The play gives us the information about Karnadeva's victory over Gazni. Karna flourished in A.D. 1064-1094. Some scholars say that Karnasundari was the princess Mayanalla, daughter of Kadambavansha of the South, whom Hemachandra in his *Divyashraya Kavya* (9th canto) described in about 84 verses.

Bilhana has also paid his tribute to the Jain god Jina, in the *nandi* verse of the play. We can see the harmony between the Jainism and the Vaishnavism in those days. The beautiful images of Lord Vishnu and other deities have been carved at the Dilwara temple of Jain gods in Mount Abu. This temple was built up by Karnadeva's father-Bhimadeva in A.D. 1035. The Dilwara temple of Mount Abu and the staging of Bilhana's play the *Karnasundari* at the Jina temple in Anhilwad (Pattana) confirms the harmony between the sects in India.

The occasion was the celebration of the Jain Tirthankara-I Rishabhadeva Jatra Mahotsava and it was inspired by Karna's Jain minister-Sampatkara. (known as Sanat Mehta).

In the *Karnasundari,* the statement of Bilhana in the following words, सद्यो यः पथि कालिदासवचसां श्रीबिल्हणः सोऽधुना shows that Bilhana had set Kalidasa before him as his ideal poet. The play shows the influence of other poets also.

This play was his first presentation while he was in Gujarat. The characterisation in the play sustains the main *rasa shringara.*

Bilhana's selection of the plot of king Karnadeva's love-affair reflects poet's inclination towards two elements, one is poet's inclination towards the element of love and the second is his mind to choose a hero of real life, i.e. Karnadeva of the Gujarat Chalukya dynasty of Anhilwad. His historical sense again has emerged in his *mahakavya*, the *Vikaramankadeva-Charita* in which he had chosen the hero from the real life, i.e. Trubhuvanamalla of Karnata Desha known as Vikrama VI.

The Chaura-Panchashika

While giving an account of Bilhana's life, we have seen how the episode of his love-affair was not the talk of the town only, but also of the age. The entire Panchashika literature confirms the popularity by the fact that these original 50 *shlokas* have been revealed from time to time by both the teachers and the lovers of poetry. There are three recensions—Bengali, South Indian and Kashmirian with some different versions. Winternitz says that 'this great difference of recensions is in any case, a proof of extra ordinary popularity of the poem in India.' Krishnamachariar comments that in India, even today, the poem is liked by so much that no Indian child fails to commit to memory at least some of theses stanzaas. In the West people will not like to place the poem in the hands of young persons. In those 50 verses, only the recollection of poet's love-making has been expressed at a critical moment when the royal executors were to hang the poet for the secret love with Shashikala, the daughter of the king.

There are some editions of the *Panchashika*, of which one or two are noteworthy. The edition published by the National Museum, New Delhi 1967 presents the 50 verses with the beautiful medieval paintings depicting the love games played by the poet with the princess. Like Bilhana's poems describing the amorous pleasures with a princess, the painter also presented the sensuous pictures in this recension. This picturesque text is a beautiful work of love-lyrics with original paintings. The work is edited by Leela Shiveshwarkar. It contains 18 colour plates in which the events of the text are illustrated.

According to Leela Shiveshwarkar, the *Bilhana-Charita* and the *Bilhaniya-kavya* seem to be identical and the text appears with the title *purva-peethika* (the northern recension), and the *Bilhana-Charita purva-Panchashika.*

C. Shivaramamurti observes that the lyrical charm of the *Panchashika* makes it appropriate for delineating the ideas with colour and brush. It is indeed a great service to Sanskrit literature that patrons of painters, facinated by the poems, have encouraged them to illustrate texts. It is further observed that 'the composing religious literature in miniatures was more an expression of piety than appreciation of literary beauty. In fact, the lyrics like the *Amarushataka,* the *Meghaduta* and others need to be presented through the fine art'. It is rightly said that 'illustrating a delightful medieval Sanskrit lyric throws considerable light on an important school of painting.'

S.N. Tadpatrikar's edition of the *Panchashika* with the introduction and the translation is appreciable. The titles of the work have been mentioned by Aufrecht. "चौरीसुरतपञ्चाशिका, usually called चौरपञ्चाशिका, also बिल्हणपञ्चाशिका, and शशिकला-पञ्चाशिका, *kavya* by Bihana."

The editions with different prefixes give the whole love-story in Tadpatrikar's edition. Versions in the appendices 1 and 2 are under the title पूर्व-पीठिका which gives the northern version (1), and बिल्हणचरित-पूर्व-पञ्चाशत् which gives the southern version (2) of the life of the poet.

The editor refers to the Mss. material, which reveals the fact that this small piece of 50 verses is found in these recensions, and it is strange to say that, a comparison of these shows us that only five verses are found to be common to all the three. The verses are in numbers 1,2,11, 12 and the last 50, according to the N. recension given by the editor here as the main text, which is the one followed by at least one of the commentators of which Aufrecht mentions four.

The commentary by गणपति is विलासिजन-चित्तकैरवचन्द्रिका (Ms. No. 437/1884-87).

It shows how the commentator accepts the popularity of the work among gay people (विलासिजन). The Kashmiri recension is in the Sharada characters.

The Ms. of Madras contains the Southern recension. This recension is divided into two parts. The पूर्व-पञ्चाशत् consists of the 100 *shlokas* given in Appendix of the edition (No. 2) and 4 *shlokas* of the main पञ्चाशिका text. Then comes the उत्तर-पञ्चाशत् beginning with अद्यपि तां कनक, the first *shloka,* and ending with some additional *shlokas.* The editor further refers to a recension also, 'in a long text of 90 stanzas, and this contains a mixture of all the three recensions. This last Ms. is dated 1703 (2 v.) *shaka.*

I could find three more Mss. (Nos. NUL 780, 839) preserved in the Nagpur University Mss. Library of Nagpur. One Ms. is as the. पूर्व-चतुस्सप्तति, a *panchashika* version in 74 *shlokas* like पूर्व-पीठिका and the second is the चौर-पञ्चाशिका with टीका on 50 *shlokas*. The third one is the text which contains 74 verses of the Poona edition called पूर्व-पीठिका, the same is called पूर्व-चतुस्सप्तति in the Ms. of Nagpur.

The text starts after the *mangalacharana* with the name of king Vairisimha and his daughter Shashikala. The prefix verses give the love-story. These verses also are attributed to Bilhana, but Bilhana's story is narrated by a different man in the prefix. Instead of the पूर्व-पञ्चाशत् (the Southern recension), it is पूर्व-चतुस्सप्तति in the Nagpur manuscript.

The Poona edition gives in the appendices:

1. पूर्व-पीठिका 2. बिल्हण-चरित-पूर्वपञ्चाशत्

3. बिल्हण-पञ्चाशत्-प्रत्युत्तरम् 4. पाठान्तरेषु दृष्टानि अधिकानि पद्यानि।

From this, we come to the conclusion that the text of 50 verses is the basis of the other prefixes and suffixes. It shows the popularity of the poet as a *shringara kavi.* He was accepted as a poet in the entire country.

Durgashankar K. Shastri does not accept that the पञ्चाशिका was written by Bilhana. According to him, a different poet named चौर कवि composed the पञ्चाशिका. But the colophon of the *shloka* he has referred to the date of writing this work in A.D.1788, which is not acceptable.

A.B. Kieth's Observation

"Of purely erotic type is the *Chaura Panchashika* which is certainly by Bilhana, author of *Vikramachartia*". He does not believe in the love-story as Bilhana's authentic event. He says further:

"It is highly probable that there is no personal experience at all in these lines whose warmth of feelings undoubtedly degenerates into license"

Bilhana inspired many a poet to add or to produce *Panchashika* episodes. In the 16th century, शशिकला-विरह प्रताप was written in Gujarathi. Jain poet Jnanacharya rendered the बिल्हण-काव्य and शशिकला-काव्य in hybrid Sanskrit. Poet Vitthal had translated this work into Marathi in Shaka 1599 which is published in the काव्येतिहास-संग्रह. In Hindi also there is a translation. Sir Edwin Arnold presented a poem in which the feelings contained in पञ्चाशिका have been rendered. It shows how the *kavya* was popular in Indian literature.

The names of the commentators of the *Panchashika* are Ganapati, Maheshwara Pandita, Rama-Tarkawageesha, Radhakrishna, Ramopadhyaya and Basavesvara.

At the moment of the catastrophy, the poet at the gloomy occasion of the execution remembers his beloved Shashikala and the love games with her. As a piece of fine art of poetry, Bilhana can be read with a special aesthetic attention.

The poet starts with his expression as under:

'Even now, I think of her of a bright colour like a garland of gold *champaka,* her face beaming like a full-blown lotus, with a thin line of hair (at the navel), just got up from sleep, her whole body showing the keen desire affected by passion of her like learning affected by intoxication (No. 1).

It means that the growth of her navel hair was simply new and shows that she had first attained 'puberty and fresh youth.'

Bilhana in the consequent verses recollects his romances with his beloved. In a verse he says 'Even at this last moment (of my life) I remember the face of my beloved.' (No. 10). And he further describes 'remembering her bands of hair having dropped away and the flowers thereon falling off in our secret

meeting....' (No. 17). He could not forget her charming body slender in the waist (No. 46). He still remembers that lustful girl of golden brightness and so on.

The free expression of a lover with these verses in the original पञ्चिका consisting of 5 verses got the popular response to grow in to the form of the पञ्चाशिका, 50 verses. It gives us the idea already regarding the new trends in the *kavya* literature prevalent in the medieval age. The *mahakavya* and the *gadyakavyas* had already attained prominent position in the literature in the ancient period. Kalidasa, Bharavi, Magha, Subandhu, Bana and Dandi produced popular '*prabandha kavyas,* but except the *Meghaduta* of Kalidasa, no lyric was traditionally as popular as that of *Chaura-Panchashika.*

In the end in 50th verse, the poet has changed the pattern by saying:

अद्यापि नोज्झति हर: किल कालकूटं
कूर्मो बिभर्ति धरणीं खलु पृष्ठभागे।
अम्भोनिधिर्वहति दुस्सहवाडवाग्निम्
अंगीकृतं सुकृतिन: परिपालयन्ति।।

It means: 'God Shiva does not still give up the deadly poison; the Great Tortoise bears the Earth on his back; the ocean contains the unbearable *wadava* fire; (in short), high-souled people stick to what they have once accepted' (No 50).

It is the gesture of the feudal system of the medieval age that people were tempted to follow the merrymaking events of the kings and queens. The palaces were full of romances barring the war expeditions, but the society was free comparatively to imitate the feudal trend in life. So, the verses of Bilhana were applauded by the society so much that the entire *Panchashika*-literature was produced by other poets and added some similar verses with it as the part of the original work.

This trend was inevitable, because it was not a feeble attempt of a weak poet. It was the honourable assignment which was encashed by the genius poets in the royal courts.

The emphasis on the love with a beloved has been the main element. If the royal courts were receptive, sentiment of *shṙingara* was rampant in the *kavya*. Not only it was in excess, it was liked by the society also. The society of those days was following the trend according to the saying :

यथा राजा तथा प्रजा।

However, poets's calibre was certainly at stake. It was equally appreciated by rulers as well as the people. Bilhana, by way of presenting intensively his love-affairs in these verses, wanted to express his fancy and feelings both in a free and fine manner.

If the liberty is the soul of romanticism, it was made true in the expression of his sensuous experiences with his beloved in a free gesture, which was appreciated by the society. Of course, no prolonged sensuous feelings can be maintained in a *kavya*. Bilhana had finished his *kavya* within 50 *shlokas* only.

Any excellent lyric itself is a free exposition from any regulations. Bilhana, like in the *natika Karnasundari*, was not in a mood to care any definition of the *khandakavya* for his *Panchashika*. He says, it is the readers' aestheic mind which appreciates the intensivity and sensitivity of a lyric. At times, poets like Kalidasa in the *Meghaduta* took liberty for such an expression which does not seek any moral sanction. It is beyond any hard and fast rule of general moral, conjecture borne by the society. Although, poetry is concerned with life and its regulations in general, but life itself is liberated in poetry from limitations and binding.

Even in the plays, the status of any *vidushaka* is raised to a minister of merry-making (the नर्म सचिव), the intrigues and planning are the activities of the harem of rulers, a free रति in *shringara* was also accepted in a lyric like the *Pạnchashika*.

It is to be noted that the last *shloka* gives a different picture, as his tone is about the life itself, and not for any particular love-making as such. He says that high souled people stick to what they have once accepted (Verse 50).

There is no direct reference to Bilhana's beloved. It is just like a सुभाषित. But it is found in every version of the *Panchashika*.

The implication of this last may denote that once Bilhana as her lover accepts his beloved as an asset to his life, he will not desert her. This conclusion well suits the occasion.

Like any lyric, there is no *mangalacharana* or worshipping a deity. Kalidasa in his *Meghaduta* started without any salutation. The bravity is the soul of wit. The feelings are more prominent in a lyric, and there is no room for telling a long story of a hero and a heroine. In the *Panchashika* also we find the first verse only starts with the recollection of his beloved. The experiences are so much deep that he cannot give the details of the story. This emotional outcome of a disturbed lover is the essence of the *kavya, Panchashika.*

The tittle bears the word *chaura* only denotes the secret love making of the poet enjoyed by him in the palace.

The main *rasa* is the विप्रलम्भशृङ्गार in this lyric. Since the union of the separated couple will take place at the order of the king, it is the *shringara* in which the pathos plays a supporting role. The रति is the स्थायी भाव. It may be called *khandakavya,* since only one aspect of love is dealt with. But in fact, it is a small piece of fine art; does not fit in the frame-work of any form of the traditional literature. This is why it has been attractive for general readers.

The *Chaura Panchashika* is a *khandakavya,* but cannot be compared with the *Meghaduta* of Bilhana's ideal poet Kalidasa. Tadpatrikar observes:

'Of course, there is nothing common (between the *Panchashika* and the *Meghaduta*) except that the sentiment underlying the poems is विप्रलम्भ शृङ्गार, but in the पञ्चाशिका the poet seems to have outdone his master by far, so that the poem often 'degenerates into license' as stated by Kieth. But in this very element lies the gem of the great popularity enjoyed by the small poem. The background, too, attaching to पञ्चाशिका is more vivid and romantic than that of the *Meghaduta.*

However, Kalidasa does not show any aggressive feudal influence on his literature, and hence the eternal value of his lyric cannot be ignored, and in the पञ्चाशिका we find the popular approach of the poet towards the appreciation at the courts of

kings in the medieval age. At the same time, we must admit that Bilhana is independent in his expression and does not apply the demand and the supply rule in a crude sense. His expression of the शृंगार is unreserved, but not shallow.

No less a critic than Dr. Buhler says about our poet, 'his composition deserves to be rescued from obilivion—he possesses a spark of poetic fire. Bilhana's verse is flowing, musical, and his language, simple.'

The question of ethics in life cannot be ignored, however the same element cannot be imposed on the presentation of शृंगार if it is by a competent poet like Bilhana.

After all, the *Panchashika* may not be included in the syllabus meant for children, nor the sensuous illustrations will be palatable to them, however the grown up readers of aesthetic values can relish the intensive *rati* in a Sanskrit *kavya*. It is a rare piece of art if the *rasaraja, shringara* is indicated by a real poet.

This is why we can say that Kalidasa's *Meghaduta* is acceptable to all ages, because unlike *Pancheshika*, the *Meghaduta* presents excellent synthesis of all super elements including the depiction of the nature, the human agony, the panorama of the landscape, the harmony and the coherence between the self and the rest of the world; and above all the Nature is alive with human interest. In the *Panchashika* we find the enchantment of the view with a sensuous but intensive feeling. We enjoy to peep out to see the secretive view.

This opportunity is rare for readers when the personal recreative experience of a poet becomes impersonal, i.e. universal. I am afraid the *samyoga shringara* becomes prominent in most of the verses and the element of the *vipralambha* is forgotten. Even then in a way, the poet is successful, because he is the master of his art.

Krishnamachariar has mentioned Bilhana's short poem in praise of Lord Shiva as the Shivastuti.

The Vikramankadeva-Charita

A Historical Mahakavya

After two minor works, Bilhana finally composed the *mahakavya*, the *Vikramankadeva-Charita*. As we have already seen that this *mahakavya* is based on the valour and virtues of the western Chalukya king Tribhuvanamalla, known as Vikrama VI of Kalyana, the capital of Karnata-Desha in the south.

Krishnamachariar says that 'the main theme of this laudatory poem is royal wars and royal marriages.' The medieval society was equally interested to enjoy peace in life under the benevolent autocracy in the form of a king. It was an institute for the people. The poet himself enjoyed in Kalyana the patronage of Vikrama VI.

There were three contemporary rulers in India when Bilhana flourished:

1. King Harsha Deva of Kashmir, 2. Bhojadeva of Dhara; and 3. Vikrama of Kalyana. When Bilhana left Kashmir, Kalasha, Harsha's father was in power, when he reached Dhara in Malwa, Bhoja was no more; and after seeing the rulers of the regions upto Rameshwar, finally while returing Bilhana got what he wanted at Kalyana (Karnata Desha).

He found an ideal patron who successfully fought wars and encouraged art and literature in peace at the same time. Harsha and Bhoja were the popular rulers who were equally the masters of war and culture. Bilhana's patron Vikrama VI was also an ideal king.

Life of Vikrama VI —His genealogy :

Once Lord Indra went to Brahma and urged the necessity

of a great warrior on the earth to finsih the menace of the wicked people. Brahma glanced at the handful of water on his palm, and then arose a bright warrior who assured Indra to remove the wicked men from the earth. The dynasty of Chalukyas is originated from that hero. The dynasty is called *'Chalukya'* because it was born in the *'Chuluka'*, i.e. in the water of Brahma's palm. The kings of this dynasty made Ayodhya as their capital. Some of them set out for winning over the world towards the south and settled there.

After some time, Tailapa a famous king of great valour flourished who defeated the Rashtrakutas. Satyashraya was also born in the family. Then Jayasinha was born. His son was Ahavamalla who conquered Dhara of Malwa and also defeated Karna, King of Dahala. He crushed the eastern Chola kings also. King Ahavamalla established his capital in Kalyana. He acquired great power and wealth, but had no son. It was the painful matter for the king and the queen, who left the kingdom and observed rigid *tapas.* Ultimately Lord Shiva was pleased. The *akashavani* proclaimed that the queen will be blessed with three sons and the middle of them will attain a great position in the world.

Then in due course of time, the queen gave birth to a son, who was named as Someshwara. Again in due course of time, a second son was born on an auspicious moment. The son showed the signs indicating his occupying the throne of a *chakravarti* in future.

This second son of king Tribhuwanamalla was known as Vikramaditya, who justified this name by his valour. Later he was called as Vikramanka-Deva also. Then the thrid son named as Jayasimha was born.

The king wanted to appoint Vikrama as the *yuvaraja* of the kingdom, since he showed his ability in the childhood days. However, in a humble way, Vikrama declined the post, because the eldest son Someshwara had the natural claim. Thus Someshwara became the *yuvaraja.* Virtually it was Vikrama who shouldered the responsibility of the kingdom and defeated the enemies, as he had promised his father.

When Vikrama attacked the Chola king, the latter ran away from his capital, Kanchi. Vikrama helped the Paramara king Jayasimha of Dhara in Malwa to regain his kingdom. Other rulers also saved their kingdom by offering the territories or sometime daughter's hand to Vikrama in marriage. Vikrama attacked and killed rulers of Kerala. The ruler of Sinhala Desha (Sri Lanka) accepted his rule. He killed Vengiraja and after winning over the ruler of Chakrakoti, he took possession of all his elephants.

While he was engaged in his victorious expeditions, abruptly he felt uneasiness. His left eye began to pulpitate. He thought this as a sign indicating his father's ill health. Then he heard about it at the river Krishna. At that time, a messenger from the capital Kalyana came to Vikrama and intimated him the sad news of the death of his father king Ahavamalla on the bank of Trungabhadra river. He was told that in his last moments Ahavamalla was immensely happy by knowing the victories of Vikrama. The son faced a deep grief due to father's death. He fell down and lamented.

After some days, he went to Kalyana to see his eldest brother Someshwara. Vikrama paid respects to him. He offered to Someshwara whatever he had obtained in wars.

But, Someshwara was dragged into sinful activities. The spotless character of the Chalukya-dynasty suffered a setback. He exploited the people by imposing taxes in excess, and showed that it was with the consent of Vikrama. The council of ministers was also disturbed due to Someshwara's tyranny and wished the replacement of the king with Vikrama, but the latter again declined to usurp the throne. However, he could not prevent Someshwara from the mal-practices. Being despaired, Vikrama preferred to leave his brother and left Kalyana. He took his younger brother Jayasimha with him just to save him from the evils of Someshwara. After knowing this, Someshwara sent the force to attack Vikrama, but the force was defeated by the latter.

Presuming the attacks on Someshwara from enemies, Vikrama crossed the river Tungabhadra and moved towards the kingdom of Chola king. He spent some days in the forest

and further reminded his previous victories to the ruler of Malaya and then went to the eastward. Meanwhile Jayakeshi, the ruler of Konkana, offered the wealth more than demanded to Vikrama. The ruler of Alupa surrendered to him, and saved his wealth.

After this the messenger of the King of Dravida came to Vikrama, requesting him to accept the hand of the princess of the Chola king in marriage. Vikrama extended his consent for the marriage. Accordingly, the Chola king came down to the river Tungabhadra and gave the hand of his beautiful daughter to Vikrama. Being allowed by the son-in-law, the Chola king went back to his capital. Vikrama gave away all the wealth received from the Chola king to the guests. Chola was very much happy. Vikrama also, after Chola's departure, remembered him very affectionately. The men of pure heart are tender like flowers.

After some days Vikrama heard the sad news of the death of the Chola king. He was shocked and wept over the loss. After the death of the Chola king, there was a great struggle for the throne. When he knew this, Vikrama went to Kanchi to install Adhiraja Rajendra, the son of Veera Rajendra on the throne. Having slained the enemies, Vikrama got the *yuvaraja* seated on the throne. After staying for a month, he left Kanchi for the river Tungabhadra.

After the departure of Vikrama, Rajendra Chola (Rajiga), the ruler of Vengi Desha, occupied the throne and killed Adhiraja Rajendra in Kanchi. He presumed of the attack from Vikrama, hence he provoked Someshwara, the brother of Vikrama, to be against Vikrama from the back-side.

The irony of fate is this that Someshwara, the elder brother wanted to destroy his younger borther Vikrama just to help their traditional enemy Chola. The wicked rulers like Someshwara defamed their own family. Due to the sinful nature of the notorious rulers, the wealth of the kingdom disappeared like a boat which was finished at once struck on the mountain rocks in the sea.

Vikrama tried to avoid the conflict. He was unhappy over the situation in which he had to fight against his elder brother,

who had denigrated himself by joining his enemy Chola. He also never wanted to kill his brother and sent a message to him (Someshwara) for going back from the battle-field. But the wicked brother, Someshwara, did not accept it. While Vikrama was thinking to avoid the killing of his brother, in his dream, Lord Shiva appeared and told him 'Oh son! why are you in a dilemma? Your elder brother very soon will lose everything. Get ready to fight and destroy the menace of the wicked men, you have come to the earth for the protection of the *dharma*'

In the morning overpowered with the dream, he came out of his camp for fighting. The war was fought vigourously Vikrama defeated Vengiraja who ran away and Someshwara was arrested. However, Vikrama was kind to his brother and wanted to give him back the kingdom, but he was prevented by Lord Shiva.

Then, Vikrama came to Kalyana and his coronation as the king was celebrated. His younger brother Jayasimha was made in-charge of the area known as Vanawasa Mandala. Vikrama won over the enemies and extended the welfare to his subjects. Even Chola was made calm and quiet. He then came back to Kalyana and enjoyed peaceful life.

At the time, Vikrama heard the news about the *swayamvara* of a princess, the daughter of the King of Karhata Desha, named Chandralekha. He liked the beautiful princess very much, but he was not sure whether his desire would be materialised. Due to this anxiety he became pale. While he was pining for Chandralekha, a messenger came to the king, and gave the message that Chandralekha also loved Vikrama after she heard about him. He was told that her father also would not give her hand to any other king except Vikrama. So he should attend the *swayamvara* and give her the opportunity to garland him. On hearing this, the king was delighted very much and immediately started to reach the capital of Karhata Desha.

He was well received by the King of Karhata. He appeared with grace in the *swayamvara.* Chandralekha presented herself in the galaxy of rulers. Every ruler present there was surprised to look at the beautiful princess. Then the *pratihari* introduced the rulers of Ramavanshiya Kumar, Chediraja, Kanyakubja,

Parthakulakumar, Kalinjara, Gopachala, Malwa, Gujarat, Pandya and Chola. However, leaving all these rulers aside, Chandralekha (Chandala) went to Vikrama and garlanded him. There was no one who could fight against Vikrama, because they already knew of his power.

In the first spring with Chandralekha, Vikrama enjoyed his stay in Karhata Desha in the games of the flower-collection, the drinking etc., and then came back to Kalyana in the rainy season.

In the next spring, a reliable person informed Vikrama the unpallatable news that his younger brother Jayasimha, whom he loved and helped so much, became notorious administrator. Vikrama was told that Jayasimha was trying to appease Vikrama's enemy Chola by offering gifts. Very soon Jayasimha would stand in confrontation with Vikrama at the bank of the river Krishna. On hearing this Vikrama was silent. He was noble-minded and remained undisturbed. He got the unpleasant news confirmed and thought over it.

In the autumnal season, he again tried to advice his younger brother, but it was in vain. At the same time, Jayasimha came to the river Krishna ready to fight. Many a ruler joined him against Vikrama. Jayasimha challenged Vikrama. Vikrama, however, once again tried to pacify the younger brother, but the latter declined to accept any post. Then Vikrama had to meet him on the battle-field. The war waged and Vikrama defeated the enemy, took the wealth in possession and came back to his capital. Jayasimha was arrested and brought before Vikrama, but he was so kind-hearted, he pardoned him. Thus he bestowed peace on the earth.

He was blessed with three sons. He established the temples, ponds, *agraharas*, etc. in the kingdom. Again he got the information of the movement of Chola king against him. Then he went on the Chola king and forced him to run away from the battle-field. After coming back to Kalyana, he ruled like Rama for the welfare of the public.

Bilhana finished the poetic account of Vikrama in the end of 17th canto, and in the last 18th chapter he described his home-land Kashmir and in the end he secured the place for his family,

and his frank views about the poets and patrons, and his last desire without any pretension or expectation. He became philospher in the end to aspire not for wealth or health, but for the *Brahma.*

A Historical Mahakavya

Bilhana presents the important historical life-sketch of the western Chalukya king Tribhuvanamalla, who is known as Vikramaditya or Vikramanka (Vikrama). He was the sixth Vikramaditya in succession of the rulers who had been holding the prestigious title as the Vikramaditya. The title denotes the tradition of great kings of India who had been extending the royal patronage to culture through art and literature.

In this glorious tradition, we can see that the wicked rulers might have achieved success, but could not hold this title. It means that although it was a royal decoration, but it was concurrently accepted by the people. The rulers' cruel reigning never inspired people to offer great honour to their kings. The title of the Vikramaditya gives a great tradition of powerful rulers who were the custodians of art and literature. As we have seen how Bilhana expressed his views about the rulers who do not patronise the poets:

पृथ्वीपतेः सन्ति न यस्य पार्श्वे कवीश्वरास्तस्य कुतो यशांसि?

(Nobody knows about the rulers with whom the great poets are not associated).

The Historicity

Every poet does not give the full history of any ruler. The *Ramayana* is more than a history. The *Mahabharata* is no doubt an epic *mahakavya,* but it contains the material of the history; however it is the outcome of the great ancient war between Pandavas and Kauravas. The elements of story-literature along with the historical events were combined by the Bhrigus and Sutas, the myths and legends coming through the

ages have been recorded in the *Mahabharata.* A section of the Vedic people, not allowed to perform the *yajna* and to recite the Vedas, consisted mostly of Sutas who diverted their curious energy towards the preservation of the folk-lore coming from the Vedic age.

The ballads of great heroes in the Vedic age got prominence in prayer hymns of the Rigveda. The historical events appeared in the form of myths and legends in the *Mahabharata.*

In view of the great popularity of the *Itihasapurana,* Sutas preserved the old stock of Vedic mythology which developed into the *Mahabharata* first and then the *purana* literature. The great tradition of the *puranas* have glorified those original historical events. Of course, the facts and figures of history were over-powered by the propagation of a particular sect or cult in later period. Moreover, the encyclopaedic presentation of every popular folk-tale could not allow the narrator to tell dry historical events. However, the miracles have covered the history, but the new investigation has been conducted to trace the social history of our ancient nation from these great works. To understand India, one has to know of her mythology. From the Rigvedic dialogue-hymns, we can safely trace the history of the tribes like the Panis, giving us the factual events of the Vedic age. From the Sarama-Pani-Samvada, we learn about Sarama as the first lady ambassador of the vedic age.

However, Dr. G. Buhler and some other scholars have pointed out the lapses on the part of Sanskrit pandits that the history has been neglected by them, saying that 'they had a greater liking for the wonderful legends of the heroic age and for the no less marvellous stories of their kings, for one reason or another, they have lifted out of the sphere of the matter of fact history and transferred to fiction.'

Further, Dr.Buhler observes :

'Not that rulers of India found no contemporaries willing to chronical their deeds but that no body cared to preserve historical works from distruction or to make them easily accessiblle by copying and recopying the original Mss.'

The Itihasa in the Early Age

However, some scholars have shown how the elements of history was not unknown to the earliest *rishis* and authors. Scholars have referred to a hymn in the Rigveda, of which Yaska refers it to history. According to the Chhandogya Upanishad, refers to the *Itihasa-purana* as the Fifth Veda. For ancient *acharyas,* stories Yaska mentions as इतिहासमाचक्षते. He has given the name to a group of the Vedic *vyakhya-karas* as इति ऐतिहासिका: Vyasa, the author of the *Mahabharata,* tells us:

इतिहासपुराणाभ्यां वेदं समुपबृंहयेत्।
बिभेत्यज्ज्यश्रुताद् वेदो मामयं प्रहरिष्यति।।

In a humourous tone, Vyasa emphasised the essential study of the *itihasa* to explain the hymns of the Vedas, the absence of which the Vedas destroy those who possess dangerous half-knowledge. Kauilya for the first time enlisted the Atharva Veda with the *itihasa* as the two Vedas[1]. The *Mahabharata* is named as the *itihasa.* Although the *Ramayana* is an epic *(mahakavya),* it gives us a lot of historical account of those days. It cannot be said that the *Ramayana* is ornate poetry only. It is not a fiction at all. It has inspired the later authors and poets. If some scholars are still doubtful about the historicity of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana,* they are misled by the approach of western scholars who from the very beginning had no idea of the ancient historical tradition of India. In the absence of any archaeological and external evidences, the modern historians with the help of some internal evidences laid down in the literature detect the history unknown so far.

It is also true when historical heroes of the remote past become the divine characters of the legends, naturally the glorification along with the deification leads to the formation of the mythology. However, the modern disciplines like the history, the folk-lore, the anthropology etc. provide the scientific

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1. *A. Sh.* 2. 40

device to trace the history from the ancient legends and myths. Even today ancient tales tell us the tale of man.

The literary trend in the early poetry in Sanskrit shows the real freedom of expression, in which vivid and wide picture of human mind and soul was reflected.

Banabhatta was the pioneering poet who produced the *Harsha-Charita* which gives us the historical account of his contemporary *samrat* Harshavardhana of Kanouj. This might have inspired the poet to select the wordly *itivritta* like that of Harsha. This was not totally a deviation from the past practices. Kalidasa had chosen the plot pertaining to the Shunga king Agnimitra of Vidisha in his play—the *Malavikagnimitra.*

The *Gauda-Vadha* of Vakpatiraja Deva as the historical *mahakavya* was for sometime ignored, perhaps because it dealt with the historical events. But, the *Navasahasanka-Charita* by Parimala Gupta, the court-poet of king Sindhula and king Bhoja of Dhara were well received, Bilhana's *Vikrtamankadeva Charita* followed the same.

In the earlier period, the genealogical account was prominent which was the part of the *Harshacharita* in contrast with the fiction like the *Kadambari* of the same author, Banabhatta.

The authors of the *puranas* also were supposed to enrich their works with the genealogy of rulers under the *vanshanukrama.* The entire material was intermixed with the mythology bearing the impact of religion. The authors of the *kavya* literature like the *Harshacharita,* etc. narrated their historical facts with the beautifying figures of speech for making the entire gamut very interesting to rulers as well as the general readers of the age.

Thus, the path was paved for the authors of the historical *kavya* with great ability.

The Historical Facts in His Work

The reigning period of Vikrama VI was A.D. 1706-1127. Bihana enjoyed his patronage.

1. Vide P.C. Shastri *V.D. Ch. Sam.* Ch. IV, p. 62;
2. *Epigraphica Indica* Vol.1, p. 296.

In the early age, ancestors of Vikrama ruled in Ayodhya. The copper-plate of Raja Raja's father Vimaladitya confirms the fact[1]. Even the origin of the dynasty on the palm of the Brahma is mentioned in an inscription.[2] Some of the scholars are doubtful about Ayodhya as the original place of this dynasty, but Bilhana has clearly said about Ayodhya as their first capital.[1]

The ancestors of the Chalukya king shifted to the south via Rajasthan, Malwa, Gujarat etc., and reached Kalyana in the Karnata Desha. The expedition of the Chalukyas in the south is confirmed by the Aihole inscription dated A.D. 634-635.

The *Ayodhya-Charita* traced, read in the Ms. form of the *Ayyana-Charita,* and referred to by Pandit Vishvanath Bhardwaj, gives the similar account of the dynasty.[2]

We find the names of the ancestors of Vikrama in the *Ayyana-Charita,* but Bilhana mentions them without their names. There were some other Chalukya rulers like Vijayaditya, Vishnuvardhana and Jayasimha Pulakeshi who helped in establishing the kingdom of the Chalukya dynasty, but Bilhana wanted to immortalise his patron and his ancestors of Kalyana only.

The shifting from Ayodhya to the south was due to the conflict with the brother. In the *Ayyana-Charita* the account is authentic. The first ruler while shifting to the south stayed at the village Chowli near Maheshwara. This is today's Choli village near Maheshwar in Malwa near Indore, on the bank of Narmada river.[3] Only the birth of the first ruler was from Brahma's palm according to Bilhana, and not from Vishnu's as stated in the *Ayyana Charita.*

The victory of Tailapa, the founder king of the Kalyana Chalukyas, over the Rashtrakutas has been mentioned by Bilhana and it is the historical fact. However, the poet avoids to mention the defeat of the Paramara king of Dhara. Perhaps he had some soft corner for Dhara, seat of learning.

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1. *V.D. Ch.* I 63.
2. Pt. V. Bhardwaj : *V.D. Ch.* II Intro, 1962.
3. Pt. Bhardwaj was unable to identify these places.

According to Amritlal Nagar, Bhoja took revenge against the Chalukya king Vikramaditya VI for the fact that his father was killed by the Chalukya Tailapa.[1] There is a historical fact that Munja, Bhoja's father, was killed by Tailapa. According to Kieth, Bilhana does not mention the fact.[2]. Bilhana wants to remain silent for unpleasant task of telling us about the actions and the counter actions between Tailapa and Munja, and also between Bhoja and Vikramaditya VI.

Bilhana a does not mention the name of Dashavarma (A.D.1008-1014) and Ayyana II (A.D.1014-1015), because no significant events took place in their regime. However, the poet mentions the name of Ahavamalla, son of Jayasimha Chalukya and informs us that Ahavamalla built up the capital city Kalyana.

According to Bilhana, Bhoja of Dhara, Karna of Dahala and Chola of Kanchi were defeated by Ahavamalla. The fact is accepted by the historians.[3]

Bilhana, it is observed, does not mention the historical fact that Ahavamalla (Someshwara I)was defeated by Rajendra Deva Chola (A.D. 1063-1070). Bilhana indirectly says about these wars with Chola kings.

The reason is quite clear. He wants to throw light on the dynasty of Kalyana Chalukyas. He was the court-poet of Kalyanapura. Moreover, he was going to produce a *mahakavya*, hence he ignored some events. He has chosen only suitable historical events. But he never mentioned any contrary events in place of the facts. He remains silent sometimes.

Bilhana has described the victorious expedition of Vikrama VI (canto III, IV) Dr. Buhler expressed his doubt about the chronology of this expedition which is described to take place in one period simultaneously. In fact, Vikrama had been engaged in fighting with Chola kings even in the regime of his father Ahavamalla. The description can be taken with a view to read the hero's victories over the rulers.

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1. *V.D. Ch.* Int. p.20
2. Kieth, *Hist, of Skt. Lit.* (Hindi) p. 189.
3. R. G. Bhandarkar, *Early Hist. of Deccan,* p. 82.

Bilhana mentions with pleasure that Vikrama VI got the king of Malwa re-established in Malwa when the latter had come for the help from the Chalukya. It was the greatness of poet's hero. It is a true event in the history.

Who was this Paramara king of Dhara? The question was discussed by some scholars.

Perhaps, the Paramar king was Jayasimha, who succeeded Bhoja. His kingdom was occupied by Udayaditya, his brother. Then he requested Ahavamalla for his help. Ahavamalla asked his son Vikrama VI who reinstalled Jayasimha on the throne of Dhara. So poet's statement is based on the historical fact.[1]

Although, the eldest son of Ahavamalla was Someshwara II, the poet paints him having bad character, but history does not say anything about this. It seems, the poet is partial to Vikrama. The information about Someshwara's crookedness is given in the Vikrama's inscription and by Bilhana only. Hence the account given by the court-poet of Vikrama about Someshwara cannot be finally accepted.[2] Someshwara was not a timid man. He had defeated Veera Rajendra Chola. He conquered Malwa also. Bilhana is partial towards his patron, he does not find any fault with Vikrama. The scholars have blamed Bilhana for this; but in fact, the poet was going to paint Vikrama as a *dheerodatta nayaka,* his noble nature, successful expeditions and compassion as per the traditional rule to present the Hero's character and the poet did the same. The hero of Sanskrit epic is an embodiment of all virtues. The characterisation of Vikrama is not far away from the history, but certainly fulfils the expectations as that of a hero in the Sanskrit *mahakavya.*

Bilhana does not say about the marriage of the daughter of Jayakeshin I with Vikrama VI. However, the account of Vikrama's marriage with the daughter of Chola king Veera Rajendra is true to history. The statement of the poet regarding the killing of Adhirajendra and the occupation of Kanchi by Vikrama is also true. Bilhana mostly follows the facts.

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1. M.L. Sharma : *V.D. Ch.* Int. p 24; P.C. Shastry : *V.D. Ch.* pp. 78-79.
2. R.C. Majumdar, *Pracheen Bharata.* pp. 360-361.

It was true that Someshwara attacked Vikrama with the help ofRajiga. Vikrama defeated Someshwara. Some historians suspect that Someshwara was killed in the jail, but Bilhana is silent about it. The account about Jayasimha is true. Moreover, the benevolent rule of Vikrama as described by the poet is acceptable to the history. Vijnaneshwara Pandit also confirms this fact in the introductory verses of his *Meetakshara.*

The historians, on the contrary, are benefitted by the description by Bilhana in his *mahakaya,* and they got the confirmation of the same from the inscriptions available. Bilhana's narrative itself is an evidence.

The Kalyana Chalukya have been called Paramadi by Kalhana, the word is mentioned in the inscription and in the *Kumarapala-Charita.* It is quite possible that the enemy of the Paramara kings of Dhara was called परिमारि, which becomes in the south Paramadi. In fact, the Chalukya were not called the Paramaras. Bilhana does not use the word.

Bilhana is more authentic in giving us the historical events than Parimala Gupta, the poet of the *Navasahasanka Charita.* The *Bhoja Prabandha* gives us the history, however, the *Vikramankadeva Charita* is more reliable in respect of the scrutiny made by the competent historians like Bhandarkar, Dr. Buhler, Aufrecht and others.

Literary Appreciation

As a Mahakavya

The *Vikramankadeva-Charita* is a *mahakavya* in Sanskrit consisting of 18 cantos. According to the Sanskrit poetics, it is a *mahakavya,* in which the hero is a *rajarshi.* He is noble-minded and valiant enough to defeat his enemies. Primarily, the enemy of Vikrama was Chola of Kanchi. His hostile brothers, Someshwara and Jayasimha also fought against him. He conquered them just to protect the public from their mal-practices. His dynasty is famous, originated from the Brahma's grace. The life of Vikrama is full of virtues of a *dheerodatta nayaka,* the hero of the *mahakavya.* It is a *prabandha kavya* and essentially interesting due to its treatment of *rasa.* To maintain the *rasa*, a fiction is also introduced. However, most of the events can be confirmed by the historical evidences. The main *rasa* is *veera* as per the *kavya* rules.

It is primarily a *kavya,* and not a book on history. The poet introduces the dialogue between Indra and Brahma just to give the divine origin of the Chalukya dynasty. This may be due to the influence of the mythological trend come through the ages to the poet. The element of the myth-narration is adopted to raise the status of the hero, Vikrama.

He briefly gives the account of hero's ancestors. The poet knows the quantum of the material to be used in the historical *mahakavya.*

The birth of the hero is also highlighted with the pious actions of his father king Ahavamalla. The piety gives the propriety in selecting the life of Vikrama by the poet.

The *kavya* is composed in more than 8 *sargas,* which contains more than 70 verses.

According to the traditional rule, a prominent *rasa* must be the one of *shringara, veera* and *shanta.* Here in this *mahakavya,* the *rasa-veera* is prominent, and other *rasas* like *shringara* appear to support the prominent one. The *rasa shringara* is powerful in supporting this main *rasa veera.* Bilhana, being very much interested in depicting the conjugal love, does not avoid any opportunity to depict the *shringara rasa*.

According to the *kavya* rules the *vastu* (plot) of a *mahakavya* should not be mere a fiction or a false event. It should be confirmed with the *puranas,* history, public (folk-lore) or mixed account.

A historical plot is taken up for this *mahakavya*. The plot is based on the history of poet's contemporary king Vikrama VI, hence it has become authentic. The element of the reality developed in the mind of the poet. It was the deviation from the myths and legends of the remote past. Due to this new approach, the readers were also involved in real account presented in the poetic style. The contents were also liked by them and the new trend was welcomed by the people without losing the aesthetic beauty in the *mahakavya.* Now, we are accustomed to the plot of modern age in which our experience co-exist in our mind. In the days of Bana, Vakpatiraja, Parimala Gupta and Bilhana, a plot on the contemporary ideal king also created great interest in the readers' mind.

We, therefore, can say that the *Vikramankadeva-Charita* is more than a biography of a king. It is a *mahakavya* for which a most suitable hero in Vikrama VI was found by the poet. Bilhana chose his patron's (Vikrama's) life as the ideal subject for his *mahakavya* just because he gained enough wealth and honour from him. Vikrama was the ideal king and the great poet wanted to immortalise him. He had the capacity to do so.

The Influence

A poet is inspired to compose a *kavya*, unknowingly maintains the influences of his former poets. In this way, we can find this kind of influence in Bilhana's *Vikramankadeva-Charita,* but it does not mean that Bilhana merely imitated

others. On the contrary, he was independent. Many a time he expressed the new ideas and thoughts. Here imitation cannot sustain the strength of a poem, the strength of a poem is the beauty of it. However, according to Vamana, (A.D 800), the *saundarya* is *kavya* (सौन्दर्यमलंकारः) This अलंकार is the अलंकृति in itself. The poet of original genius can create this beauty in his *kavya*, the *saundarya* cannot be inserted from outside. Bilhana was the poet of the *saundarya*.

Kalidasa's literary merits are praised everywhere. He is also influenced by Valmiki. Anandavardhana says that the matter which is drawn from the previous stock is presented with *rasa*, the same is a new expression like trees are blessed with flowers in the season of the spring.[1]

Bilhana was himself afraid of the plagiarism in his field. However, he never cared for such plagiarists The real poet does not suffer from the bankruptcy of genius.

Generally the critics have pointed out that Bilhana was under the influence of Kalidasa. In the *Karna-Sundari* play, he himself mentioned Kalidasa as his ideal poet.

We of course find some parallel expression in Kalidasa and Bilhana; for instance, the following examples can be quoted:

यथाक्रमं पुंसवनादिकाः क्रियाः (*Raghu*. 3.10); and

यथाक्रमं पुंसवनादिकर्मसु (*V. D. Ch.* 78)

Also King's playing in the water—

करेणुभिर्वन्य इव द्विपेन्द्रः (*Raghu*. 16. 68); and

करेणुभिः सार्धमिव द्विपेन्द्रः (*V.D. Ch.* 10.70)

Similarity in the description at the *swayamvara*

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1. पूर्वदृष्टा अपि ह्यर्था काव्ये रसपरिग्रहात्।
सर्वे नवा इवाभान्ति मधुमास इव द्रुमाः।।

शृंगारचेष्टा विविधा बभूवुः (*Raghu*. 6.12) and

आसन् विचित्राणि विचेष्टितानि (*V. D. Ch.* 9. 75)

Dr. P.C. Shastri and other writers have pointed out the similarities. However, Bilhana never followed blindly any great poet. He believed, as said before, in the new track in the field of poetry.

His Descriptions

In his *mahakavya,* the descriptions of cities, war expeditions and natural scenes are given by the poet.

There is tradition of the description of great cities in the *prabandha kavya.* Kalidasa, Bana, and Sriharsha have described the cities Alakapuri, Ujjayini and Kundinapur respectively. Bilhana also has presented the beautiful accounts of Pravarapura and Kalyana in his *mahakavya.*

The description is conventional in depicting the picture of multi-storied buildings in which beautiful ladies and the rich citizens live. Kalidasa's divine description of Alaka in the *Meghaduta* was the essential part of the lyric. But the city of Ujjayini or Kundinapura became the prestige point for a poet like Bana and Harsha. The rulers were fond of such *atishayoktis.* Hence, the life of common people is not vividly reflected in them. Being a court-poet, Bilhana is no exception to it. Anyhow, Kalidasa's Alaka and Ujjayini give picture of the local colour and the panorama of a landscape.

We can see how Kalyana, the capital of king Ahavamalla, is presented :

चकार कल्याणमिति क्रमादसौ
पुरं परार्घ्यं पृथिवीपुरन्दरः ।
यदुच्चहर्म्यावलिदीपसम्पदां
विभाव्यते कज्जलसंनिभं नभः ।।

In short, the sky is black like the smoke of the lamps placed on the big mansions of the city. We can understand how big

houses created the grandeur in the city. But, a poet must show his high tone of the art of poetry. The figure of speech, *atishayokti,* is justified for a poet if he depicts the richness of the city.

He has paid his attention to a beautiful pond of the city. However, his fancy is inclined to give the *vyatireka alankara,* by saying that the pond, where the trees created the charm, laughed at the sea which was without the *Kalpavriksha.*

However, we enjoy his fanciful presentation such as:

प्रविश्य यद्वेश्मसु रोहिणीपतिर्
गुणे महान्तं लभते न संशयः ।
यदेष राहोरूपयात्यलक्ष्यतां
पुरन्ध्रिवक्त्रेन्दुसहस्त्रमध्यगः ।।

Bilhana wants to say that the houses were so much high that the moon could enter into them. Rahu, the enemy of the moon could not detect the moon because the moon was absorbed amongst the beautiful ladies who had the faces like the moon.

This idea of entering of the moon into houses through the windows has been followed perhaps by Sriharsha in his *Naishadhiya-Charita* to denote the grandeur of the city.

The Nature

The beautiful scene of the sun-rise has been pictorised by Bilhana in the 11th canto. The last moments of the outgoing night in the sky is also beautiful. These songs were sung to awake the king and the queen.

In a verse, the poet says that young ladies maintain their ego throughout the night, but alas! the sun was to rise soon and they could not resist but surrendered.

The poet again advices the great poets how the atmosphere in the morning is congenial to compose poems:

सुकवितिलक! वेला कापि सारस्वतीयं
क्षणमवहितवित्तः काव्यचिन्तां विधेहि

It shows his deep inclination towards the nature and its inspiring element.

The evening is also very much pleasant. His fancy works: 'In the evening the lusture of the sun became dim and hence he dives into the ocean for taking the lustre from the gems of the ocean. He generalises on this :

प्रार्थनार्थमिव रत्नरुचीनां भानुरब्धिमगमद् गतकान्तिः ।
सत्त्वमुन्नतपदात् पतितानां विद्यते न महतामपि नूनम् ।। (*V.D.Ch.*11.4)

The power of great persons also goes away when they come down from their high position. It is true even today. The evening is fine in the eyes of the poet.

The evening is followed by a night, so poet's eye comes to the night. The night is black because the lamp of the sun is extinguished with the air of Brahmadeva. The night is black due to the smoke(*V.D.Ch.* 11.13).

His creativity plays with fancy. The darkness of the night becomes the curtain for erotic plays of the lovers,(*V.D.Ch.* 11.21) who meet secretly in the night.

If the night is there, how can he forget the moon? The rising moon's rays are brown, because like a child he played in the dust of the mountain.

The Seasons

The spring is described by the poet giving emphasis on the southern air due to which the separated ladies suffer a lot. Ladies swing passionately in the spring. The poet feels that the spring can be well described if the cupid himself becomes a poet. The sport in a swing by young beautiful girls is the range of the palaces of the King Shringara and the aeroplane of the Cupid.(7.15)

The summer is also beautiful. The poet in a verse speaks about a fishing rod. Young ladies throw the colourful water on

Vikrama, it looks a fishing thread to catch a fish of the Cupid (*V.D.Ch.* 12.63). In the thirteenth canto, the declining effect of summer is also nicely presented.

The Traditional Literary Elements

This *mahakavya* maintains the traditional rules regarding the *sargas,* the plot, the metres, the *rasa,* the hero and the descriptions of the sun, evening, seasons, gardens, forests, the light of the moon, the ocean, the conjugal love, the travel, the marriages etc.. Bilhana has followed them in a befitting style of *kavya*. Moreover, the description of great wars fought by his hero Vikrama with success gives the *veera rasa* a prominent position.

The rules in a *mahakavya* say that plot should be either from the *puranas* or from the history. In this the poet has chosen the historical event of a contemporary ruler. The historians are happy to note that almost all events described by the poet pertaining to the Chalukya kings, the Cholas, Kashmir rulers, Bhoja, Karna Deva and many others are confirmed by the inscriptions.

The Rasa, *Veera*

As already said that Bilhana was the master of शृंगार रस However, in the *Vikramankadeva Charita* the वीर रस is prominent. He has shown his proficiency in creating the energetic atmosphere with moral in the war.

Vikrama, the hero is shown as the दानवीर (*V.D.Ch.*17.36). The enemy Kali fled away due to Vikrama's bestowing grants. Ahavamalla is shown as धर्मवीर in the verse (*V.D.Ch.*2.44). Vikrama is दयावीर when he is compassionate with his defeated brother Jayasimha. Vikrama's role as युद्धवीर is prominent in this *mahakavya.* A scholar has referred to a verse in which Bilhana describes the war in a simple manner:

मदकरटिनमुत्करप्रतापः प्रकटितवीरमृदङ्गधीरनादः ।
मथनगिरिमिवाधिरुह्य वेगात् प्रबलवारिधिलोडनं चकार ।।

Vikrama cried with his drum-like voice, mounted on the furious elephant and churned the ocean of enemies in the war. (*V.D.ch* 6.68)

In a verse again we find the excellent description of the actual fighting in the war by a soldier:

महति समरसङ्कटे भटोऽन्य:
प्रतिभटनिर्दलनात् समाप्तशस्य: ।
अगणितमरण: प्रविश्य वेगाद्
अरिकरत: करवालमाचकर्ष ।।

(When a fighting soldier lost his weapon in the war, he unfrightened of death went forward and snatched away the sword of an enemy soldier).

This description is unique and denotes the उत्साह which is the स्थायी भावी of वीर रस

There are many such verses in which the war has become a living experience for readers to be enjoyed in his closeet. The true war episodes are pleasant,[1] and they are more interesting and effective when they are presented by competent poet like Bilhana.

In view of the depiction of the वीर रस, we can say that Bilhana's genius is not proficient in शृंगार only. He is equally the master of other sentiments also. Moreover, we can say that on account of his excellent depiction of love-making in the *Chaura-Panchashika*, his fame as a poet of शृंगार has been popularly known to the lovers of poetry, but the fame is based on 50 verses only. But this *mahakavya* has presented the warriors and their fight, the furious attacks of soldiers and king Vikrama as merciful treatment to the defeated enemies. This picture is more alive and illuminating to the militant forces in life.

Shringara

Of course, Bilhana seems eager to use the best opportunity

1. युद्धस्य कथा रम्या

in depicting the शृंगार after the marriage of Chandralekha (Chandal Devi) of Karhata was celebrated. The poet has devoted two cantos for the *samyoga shringara.*

The inspiring atmosphere is essential for love-games. There was an intensive aspiration for love in both the hero and the heroine. The love (*rati*) is the essence of *shringara,* without which no life or literature is viable.

Bilhana first describes the conjugal love between Vikrama and Chandala Devi. Both of them pine for each other.(Canto 8&9). The nature is pleasant on account of the cupid and the spring which are exciting factors for the sentiment. Obviously, Bilhana's fancy becomes fruitful to describe the love games (canto 10).

We find the description of the intoxication due to drinking wine, Vikrama's entering into bedroom, the enjoyment of the young couple and the awakening of them by the songs of lady attendants in the morning. (canto 11).

It can be seen in a verse:

आयुषे भवति यत् कुसुमेषोर्
येन यौवनतरुः फलदायी।
किञ्च रागजलधेरमृतं यत्
तत्र तन्नृपतिराचमति स्म।।

(*V.D.Ch.* 11.69)

(The tree of youth bore the fruits. The king was tasting the nectar born from the ocean of love.)

The *vipralambha shringara* is also well depicted by the poet, as Vikrama's state of mind is shown in the separation, in the following verse:

यथा यथा निःश्वसति स्म राजा
निरङ्कुशं कार्श्यमदर्शयञ्च।
तथा तथा जागरयन् धनुर्ज्या
भेजे जयास्थां भगवाननङ्गः।।

(*V.D.Ch.* 9.9)

(Due to the separation, the knig became slim and also simultaneously the victorious cupid flourished in the mind.)

The element of विरह has become unbearable. The king stops speaking any word, so his servants and the parrots kept in the cages also observed silence.

The *rasa* 'Vatsala' also can be relished in some of the spots in this *mahakavya*. When Vikrama was a child, his father Ahavamalla enjoyed his activities:

यदुत्थितः सोऽङ्गुलिसंग्रहेण
यत् किञ्चिदव्यक्तमवोचतापि ।
अभीक्ष्णमक्ष्णोः क्षवसोऽश्च तेन
क्षमापतेः संवननं बभूव ।। (*V.D.Ch.*3.7-8)

(King Ahavamalla was charmed when he saw the child Vikrama's walking with grasping the finger and speaking something not understandable).

The *karuna rasa* gets intensive when Vikrama lamented on the death of his father.

The other sentiments including *bhayanaka, adbhuta, ḥasya* , etc. have created the interest of readers. There is coherence in the treatment of *rasas*.

Rasa-dhvani is indicated with great mobility on many occasions. In a verse, the *veera rasa* is implicated when we see the enthusiasm of a soldier. (15.37). Similarly, the sweet voice of ladies was like the melodious sound of water crows. Here we find the *upama alankara* :

Alankaras: We find various figures of speech everywhere in the *mahakavya*. The first canto is full of *drishtanta alankara* for instance:

कथासु ये लब्धरसाः कवीनां
ते नानुरज्यन्ति कथान्तरेषु ।
न ग्रन्थिपर्णप्रणयाश्चरन्ति
कस्तूरिकागन्धमृगास्तृणेषु ।।

(Those who have been interested in the poems of poets do not divert their mind to any other ordinary poems. For instance, the musk-deer are interested in the fragrant plants and not in the ordinary grass.)

There are other *alankaras* also. In a verse describing Kalyanapura, we find the *atishayokti* which reflects Bilhana's genius:

त्यजन्ति हंसा: सरसी-गुणै: स्थितिं
न यत्र वर्षास्वपि हर्षगद्गदा: ।
अलंघनीयस्य निकाममुन्नतेर्
दिशन्ति वप्रस्य यशस्तु दुर्जना: ।।

(In fact, swan birds lived in the pond of this city even in the rainy season, because the pond's water was very much clean. But wicked men thought that due to the high walls of the city, birds could not leave the pond). The *alankara* is amusing also.

The *vibhavana alankara* can be appreciated when Vikrama reaches at the Malaya mountain. The poet says, despite of the spring season, the air of the Malaya blowed, due to plenty of elephants which stirred the sandalwood.(3.63)

In the description of Chandala Devi, the heroine, we enjoy the twinkling of the *mala roopaka*:

सम्पूर्णचन्द्रोदयनित्यराका लीलारसानां परिपाकभूमि: ।
इयं मनोजन्मनराधिपस्य त्रैलोक्यसाम्राज्यफला तपश्री: ।। (9. 70)

This suits the court-amusements for a court-poet, but even the *kavya* is excellently presented. Some other *alankaras* also create an aesthetic value.

Poetic Blemishes

If a person works, his personality projects. If a person is inactive, no attention will be paid to him, because along with his virtues, no commissions and omissions will be known to the world.

Similarly if a poet is active in presenting his *kavya*, the प्रौढि as per Bilhana's thinking, will be known to the readers. It is obvious that there will be some places in which we can find out the poetic blemishes. As it, without pointing out some of the embellishes, no literary appreciation is complete.

Bilhana is accepted as a great poet for his contributions in respect of *rasa, alankara, dhvani, riti, guna* etc. on one hand and poet's fancy, presentation, symbolic conception, elements of pictorial quality and characterisation on the other. However, as we love a person with all his virtues and lapses, we do like a poet along with his literary merits and demerits.

Bilhana was an alert composer of poems. Only a few blemishes have been pointed out by the critics.

For instance, the blemishes as the *viruddhamatikrit*, a (भवानी-दयित: in *V.D.* 3.44) the *gramyatva* 'भिल्ल-भल्ल' *(ibid*, 12.18), the *avachakatva* ('ललाप' *ibid* 6.8 as the verb is without any उपसर्ग), the *shrutikatu* (*ibid* 13.8, it sounds harsh to hear कार्श्यम्)

As already pointed out, one has to accept that due to the influence of the medieval age, Bilhana could not give us the real picture of human society of those days. However, one has to detect some aspects of it. Kalidasa gives us such a mirror in which common people are reflected sometime in his plays and *kavyas*. In the post-Bilhana period, Kalhana has given us the real anecdotes of a common man, an untouchable shoe-maker, who resisted and was not prepared to surrender his hut in spite of the king's order, because the land was required for building a big temple (*R.T.* 4. 55-77).

Bilhana is silent on such anecdotes of common men and women. He was a true court-poet. However, it is to be noted that Bilhana's description of Kashmir is based on his realistic approach. It is rich with his personal experiences.

The erotic games of Vikrama have become lengthy. In fact Chandala Devi is the heroine of the *mahakavya*. It is justified between the two wars for a hero's life sketch.

Style

The style is the *vaidarbhi* which has been praised by the poet. His presentation is tender and lucid.

The various metres have been used. From the *anushtubh* to the *shardula vikridita* are properly composed. He has shown his proficiency in the presentation. Moreover, the combination of the fancy and style has given him the high position among the poets of the medieval age. He has made the historical *mahakavya* as a popular and respected work in Sanskrit Literature. It is evident that *indravajra, upendravajra* or *upajati* metres are liked by the poet. But the metres have their limitations in arresting the spontaneous flow of a poet. This is why the *vyanjana* flares up.

In fact, if *vaidarbhi* is praised by the poet, the *vaidarbhi riti* is the desirable combination of all the *ritis.* Being the idealist scholar, Vamana (A.D.800)accepted the *vaidarbhi* as having all the *gunas* of poetry. Bilhana follows the sense, as we see in his *kavya* that the style is lucid and flows in a natural way.

With all these virtuous presentation of his poems. Bilhana outwits all other poets in the medieval age. In his own words one has to say—

अलौकिकोल्लेखसमर्पणेन विदग्धचेत: कषपट्टिकासु ।
परीक्षितुं काव्यसुवर्णमित- ल्लोकस्य कण्ठाभरणत्वमेति ।।

(*V.D. Ch.* 1.14)

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Abbreviation

Abh. Sh.	-	*Abhijnana Shakuntala*
A.Sh.	-	*Artha Shastra*
Ch. Up.	-	*Chhandogya Upanishad*
H.Ch.	-	*Harshacharita*
K.S.	-	*Karnasundari*
Mss.	-	*Manuscripts*
N.U.L.	-	*Nagpur University Library*
Raghu.	-	*Raghuvamsha*
R.T.	-	*Raja Tarangini*
V.D.Ch.	-	*Vikramankadeva Charita*
V.D. Ch. Sam.	-	*Vikramankadeva Charitasya Sameekshanam*

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3.	Bana	*Harshacharita, Kadambari*
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15.	Harsha	*Ratnavali Natika*
16.	Kalidasa.	*1. Abhijnana Shakuntala* *2. Malavikagnimitra* *3. Meghaduta* *4. Raghuvamsva* *5. Kumarasambhawa*

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Bilhana, the author of *Vikramankadeva Charita*—a *mahakavya, Karnasundari*—a *natika* and *Chaura Panchashika*—a lyrical work; was born at Khonmusha (Present Khonmuch) in Kashmir in the eleventh century A.D. The harbinger of national unity, Bilhana's *Vikramankadeva Charita* evinces the historical facts and biographical data of the Chalukya dynasty and of King Vikrama-VI (Tribhuvanamalla). The *Karnasundari* in four acts which presents the secret love-affair of the King Karna (A.D. 1064 A.D. 1074) with the princess Vidyadhari is a unique work of its kind. His *Chaura Panchashika* influenced and inspired other medieval Sanskrit poets to follow the *panchashika* style for amorous descriptions.

In its six chapters, the monograph presents a fascinating and detailed account of the life and literary career of Bilhana.

The author Professor Prabhakar Narayan Kawthekar (*b.*1923) has already established himself as a successful teacher besides being known as a writer in Sanskrit. He had a brilliant academic career and served as professor of Sanskrit in various government colleges from 1953 to 1981. He became the Vice-Chancellor of Vikram University, Ujjain in 1981.

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